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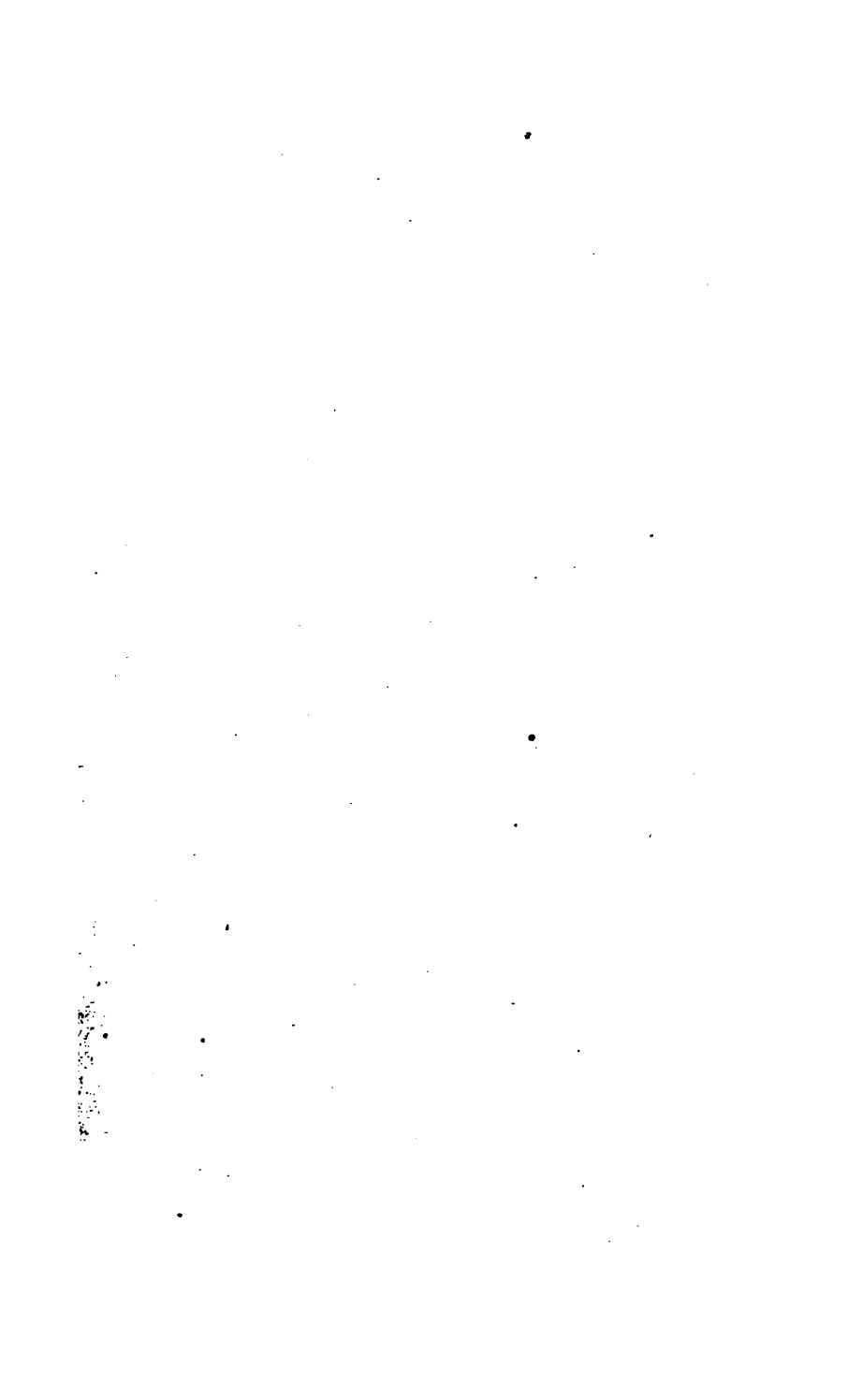
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1861

TO THE

SCHOOLMISTRESS

WHO HAS FURNISHED SOME OUTLINES MADE USE OF IN THESE
PAGES AND ELSEWHERE,

This Story is Dedicated

BY HER OLDEST SCHOLAR.



PREFACE.

THIS tale was published in successive parts in the "Atlantic Monthly," under the name of "The Professor's Story," the first number having appeared in the third week of December, 1859. The critic who is curious in coincidences must refer to the Magazine for the date of publication of the Chapter he is examining.

In calling this narrative a "romance," the Author wishes to make sure of being indulged in the common privileges of the poetic license. Through all the disguise of fiction a grave scientific doctrine may be detected lying beneath some of the delineations of character. He has used this doctrine as a part of the machinery of his story without pledging his absolute belief in it to the extent to which it is asserted or implied. It was adopted as a convenient medium of truth rather than as an accepted scientific conclusion. The reader must judge

for himself what is the value of various stories cited from old authors. He must decide how much of what has been told he can accept, either as having actually happened, or as possible and more or less probable. The Author must be permitted, however, to say here, in his personal character, and as responsible to the students of the human mind and body, that since this story has been in progress he has received the most startling confirmation of the possibility of the existence of a character like that which he had drawn as a purely imaginary conception in Elsie Venner.

BOSTON, January, 1861.

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ELSIE VENNER.

CHAPTER I.

THE BRAHMIN CASTE OF NEW ENGLAND.

THERE is nothing in New England corresponding at all to the feudal aristocracies of the Old World. Whether it be owing to the stock from which we were derived, or to the practical working of our institutions, or to the abrogation of the technical "law of honor," which draws a sharp line between the personally responsible class of "gentlemen" and the unnamed multitude of those who are not expected to risk their lives for an abstraction, — whatever be the cause, we have no such aristocracy here as that which grew up out of the military systems of the Middle Ages.

What we mean by "aristocracy" is merely the richer part of the community, that live in the tallest houses, drive real carriages, (not "keridges,") kid-glove their hands, and French-bonnet their ladies' heads, give parties where the persons who call them by the above title are not invited, and have a provokingly easy way of

dressing, walking, talking, and nodding to people, as if they felt entirely at home, and would not be embarrassed in the least, if they met the Governor, or even the President of the United States, face to face. Some of these great folks are really well-bred, some of them are only purse-proud and assuming,—but they form a class, and are named as above in the common speech.

It is in the nature of large fortunes to diminish rapidly, when subdivided and distributed. A million is the unit of wealth, now and here in America. It splits into four handsome properties; each of these into four good inheritances; these, again, into scanty competences for four ancient maidens,—with whom it is best the family should die out, unless it can begin again as its great-grandfather did. Now a million is a kind of golden cheese, which represents in a compendious form the summer's growth of a fat meadow of craft or commerce; and as this kind of meadow rarely bears more than one crop, it is pretty certain that sons and grandsons will not get another golden cheese out of it, whether they milk the same cows or turn in new ones. In other words, the millionocracy, considered in a large way, is not at all an affair of persons and families, but a perpetual fact of money with a variable human element, which a philosopher might leave out of consideration without falling into serious error. Of course, this trivial and fugitive fact of personal wealth does not create a

permanent class, unless some special means are taken to arrest the process of disintegration in the third generation. This is so rarely done, at least successfully, that one need not live a very long life to see most of the rich families he knew in childhood more or less reduced, and the millions shifted into the hands of the country-boys who were sweeping stores and carrying parcels when the now decayed gentry were driving their chariots, eating their venison over silver chafing-dishes, drinking Madeira chilled in embossed coolers, wearing their hair in powder, and easing their legs in top boots with silken tassels.

There is, however, in New England, an aristocracy, if you choose to call it so, which has a far greater character of permanence. It has grown to be a *caste*, — not in any odious sense, — but, by the repetition of the same influences, generation after generation, it has acquired a distinct organization and physiognomy, which not to recognize is mere stupidity, and not to be willing to describe would show a distrust of the good-nature and intelligence of our readers, who like to have us see all we can and tell all we see.

If you will look carefully at any class of students in one of our colleges, you will have no difficulty in selecting specimens of two different aspects of youthful manhood. Of course I shall choose extreme cases to illustrate the contrast between them. In the first, the figure is perhaps robust, but often otherwise, — inelegant, partly

from careless attitudes, partly from ill-dressing, — the face is uncouth in feature, or at least common, — the mouth coarse and unformed, — the eye unsympathetic, even if bright, — the movements of the face are clumsy, like those of the limbs, — the voice is unmusical, — and the enunciation as if the words were coarse castings, instead of fine carvings. The youth of the other aspect is commonly slender, — his face is smooth, and apt to be pallid, — his features are regular and of a certain delicacy, — his eye is bright and quick, — his lips play over the thought he utters as a pianist's fingers dance over their music, — and his whole air, though it may be timid, and even awkward, has nothing clownish. If you are a teacher, you know what to expect from each of these young men. With equal willingness, the first will be slow at learning; the second will take to his books as a pointer or a setter to his field-work.

The first youth is the common country-boy, whose race has been bred to bodily labor. Nature has adapted the family organization to the kind of life it has lived. The hands and feet by constant use have got more than their share of development, — the organs of thought and expression less than their share. The finer instincts are latent and must be developed. A youth of this kind is raw material in its first stage of elaboration. You must not expect too much of any such. Many of them have force of will and

character, and become distinguished in practical life; but very few of them ever become great scholars. A scholar is, in a large proportion of cases, the son of scholars or scholarly persons.

That is exactly what the other young man is. He comes of the *Brahmin caste of New England*. This is the harmless, inoffensive, untitled aristocracy referred to, and which many readers will at once acknowledge. There are races of scholars among us, in which aptitude for learning, and all these marks of it I have spoken of, are congenital and hereditary. Their names are always on some college catalogue or other. They break out every generation or two in some learned labor which calls them up after they seem to have died out. At last some newer name takes their place, it may be, — but you inquire a little and you find it is the blood of the Edwardses or the Chauncys or the Ellerys or some of the old historic scholars, disguised under the altered name of a female descendant.

There probably is not an experienced instructor anywhere in our Northern States who will not recognize at once the truth of this general distinction. But the reader who has never been a teacher will very probably object, that some of our most illustrious public men have come direct from the homespun-clad class of the people, — and he may, perhaps, even find a noted scholar or two whose parents were masters of the English alphabet, but of no other.

It is not fair to pit a few chosen families against the great multitude of those who are continually working their way up into the intellectual classes. The results which are habitually reached by hereditary training are occasionally brought about without it. There are natural filters as well as artificial ones; and though the great rivers are commonly more or less turbid, if you will look long enough, you may find a spring that sparkles as no water does which drips through your apparatus of sands and sponges. So there are families which refine themselves into intellectual aptitude without having had much opportunity for intellectual acquirements. A series of felicitous crosses develops an improved strain of blood, and reaches its maximum perfection at last in the large uncombed youth who goes to college and startles the hereditary class-leaders by striding past them all. That is Nature's republicanism; thank God for it, but do not let it make you illogical. The race of the hereditary scholar has exchanged a certain portion of its animal vigor for its new instincts, and it is hard to lead men without a good deal of animal vigor. The scholar who comes by Nature's special grace from an unworn stock of broad-chested sires and deep-bosomed mothers must always overmatch an equal intelligence with a compromised and lowered vitality. A man's breathing and digestive apparatus (one is tempted to add *muscular*) are just as important to him

on the floor of the Senate as his thinking organs. You broke down in your great speech, did you? Yes, your grandfather had an attack of dyspepsia in '82, after working too hard on his famous Election Sermon. All this does not touch the main fact: our scholars come chiefly from a privileged order, just as our best fruits come from well-known grafts, — though now and then a seedling apple, like the Northern Spy, or a seedling pear, like the Seckel, springs from a nameless ancestry and grows to be the pride of all the gardens in the land.

Let me introduce you to a young man who belongs to the Brahmin caste of New England.

CHAPTER II.

THE STUDENT AND HIS CERTIFICATE.

BERNARD C. LANGDON, a young man attending Medical Lectures at the school connected with one of our principal colleges, remained after the Lecture one day and wished to speak with the Professor. He was a student of mark,—first favorite of his year, as they say of the Derby colts. There are in every class half a dozen bright faces to which the teacher naturally directs his discourse, and by the intermediation of whose attention he seems to hold that of the mass of listeners. Among these some one is pretty sure to take the lead, by virtue of a personal magnetism, or some peculiarity of expression, which places the face in quick sympathetic relations with the lecturer. This was a young man with such a face; and I found,—for you have guessed that I was the “Professor” above-mentioned,—that, when there was anything difficult to be explained, or when I was bringing out some favorite illustration of a nice point, (as, for instance, when I compared the cell-growth, by which Nature builds up a plant or an animal, to the glass-

blower's similar mode of beginning, — always with a hollow sphere, or vesicle, whatever he is going to make,) I naturally looked in his face and gauged my success by its expression.

It was a handsome face, — a little too pale, perhaps, and would have borne something more of fulness without becoming heavy. I put the organization to which it belongs in Section B of Class 1 of my Anglo-American Anthropology (unpublished). The jaw in this section is but *slightly* narrowed, — just enough to make the width of the forehead tell more decidedly. The moustache often grows vigorously, but the whiskers are thin. The skin is like that of Jacob, rather than like Esau's. One string of the animal nature has been taken away, but this gives only a greater predominance to the intellectual chords. To see just how the vital energy has been toned down, you must contrast one of this section with a specimen of Section A of the same class, — say, for instance, one of the old-fashioned, full-whiskered, red-faced, roaring, big Commodores of the last generation, whom you remember, at least by their portraits, in ruffled shirts, looking as hearty as butchers and as plucky as bull-terriers, with their hair combed straight up from their foreheads, which were not commonly very high or broad. The special form of physical life I have been describing gives you a right to expect more delicate perceptions and a more reflective nature than you commonly find in

shaggy-throated men, clad in heavy suits of muscles.

The student lingered in the lecture-room, looking all the time as if he wanted to say something in private, and waiting for two or three others, who were still hanging about, to be gone.

Something is wrong! — I said to myself, when I noticed his expression. — Well, Mr. Langdon, — I said to him, when we were alone, — can I do anything for you to-day?

You can, Sir, — he said. — I am going to leave the class, for the present, and keep school.

Why, that's a pity, and you so near graduating! You'd better stay and finish this course, and take your degree in the spring, rather than break up your whole plan of study.

I can't help myself, Sir, — the young man answered. — There's trouble at home, and they cannot keep me here as they have done. So I must look out for myself for a while. It's what I've done before, and am ready to do again. I came to ask you for a certificate of my fitness to teach a common school, or a high school, if you think I am up to that. Are you willing to give it to me?

Willing? Yes, to be sure, — but I don't want you to go. Stay; we'll make it easy for you. There's a fund will do something for you, perhaps. Then you can take both the annual prizes, if you like, — and claim them in money, if you want that more than medals.

I have thought it all over, — he answered, — and have pretty much made up my mind to go.

A perfectly gentlemanly young man, of courteous address and mild utterance, but means at least as much as he says. There are some people whose rhetoric consists of a slight habitual understatement. I often tell Mrs. Professor that one of her "I think it's so" is worth the Bible-oath of all the rest of the household that they "know it's so." When you find a person a little better than his word, a little more liberal than his promise, a little more than borne out in his statement by his facts, a little larger in deed than in speech, you recognize a kind of eloquence in that person's utterance not laid down in Blair or Campbell.

This was a proud fellow, self-trusting, sensitive, with family-recollections that made him unwilling to accept the kind of aid which many students would have thankfully welcomed. I knew him too well to urge him, after the few words which implied that he was determined to go. Besides, I have great confidence in young men who believe in themselves, and are accustomed to rely on their own resources from an early period. When a resolute young fellow steps up to the great bully, the World, and takes him boldly by the beard, he is often surprised to find it come off in his hand, and that it was only tied on to scare away timid adventurers. I have seen young men more than once, who came to a great city without a single friend, support themselves and pay for

their education, lay up money in a few years, grow rich enough to travel, and establish themselves in life, without ever asking a dollar of any person which they had not earned. But these are exceptional cases. There are horse-tamers, born so, as we all know; there are woman-tamers who bewitch the sex as the 'pied piper bedeviled the children of Hamelin; and there are world-tamers, who can make any community, even a Yankee one, get down and let them jump on its back as easily as Mr. Rarey saddled Cruiser.

Whether Langdon was of this sort or not I could not say positively; but he had spirit, and, as I have said, a family-pride which would not let him be dependent. The New England Brahmin caste often gets blended with connections of political influence or commercial distinction. It is a charming thing for the scholar, when his fortune carries him in this way into some of the "old families" who have fine old houses, and city-lots that have risen in the market, and names written in all the stock-books of all the dividend-paying companies. His narrow study expands into a stately library, his books are counted by thousands instead of hundreds, and his favorites are dressed in gilded calf in place of plebeian sheepskin or its pauper substitutes of cloth and paper.

The Reverend Jedediah Langdon, grandfather of our young gentleman, had made an advantageous alliance of this kind. Miss Dorothea

Wentworth had read one of his sermons which had been printed "by request," and became deeply interested in the young author, whom she had never seen. Out of this circumstance grew a correspondence, an interview, a declaration, a matrimonial alliance, and a family of half a dozen children. Wentworth Langdon, Esquire, was the oldest of these, and lived in the old family-mansion. Unfortunately, that principle of the diminution of estates by division, to which I have referred, rendered it somewhat difficult to maintain the establishment upon the fractional income which the proprietor received from his share of the property. Wentworth Langdon, Esq., represented a certain intermediate condition of life not at all infrequent in our old families. He was the connecting link between the generation which lived in ease, and even a kind of state, upon its own resources, and the new brood, which must live mainly by its wits or industry, and make itself rich, or shabbily subside into that lower stratum known to social geologists by a deposit of Kidderminster carpets and the peculiar aspect of the fossils constituting the family furniture and wardrobe. This *slack-water* period of a race, which comes before the rapid ebb of its prosperity, is familiar to all who live in cities. There are no more quiet, inoffensive people than these children of rich families, just above the necessity of active employment, yet not in a condi-

tion to place their own children advantageously, if they happen to have families. Many of them are content to live unmarried. Some mend their broken fortunes by prudent alliances, and some leave a numerous progeny to pass into the obscurity from which their ancestors emerged ; so that you may see on handcarts and cobblers' stalls names which, a few generations back, were upon parchments with broad seals, and tombstones with armorial bearings.

In a large city, this class of citizens is familiar to us in the streets. They are very courteous in their salutations ; they have time enough to bow and take their hats off, — which, of course, no business-man can afford to do. Their beavers are smoothly brushed, and their boots well polished ; all their appointments are tidy ; they look the respectable walking gentleman to perfection. They are prone to habits — to frequent reading-rooms, insurance-offices, — to walk the same streets at the same hours — so that one becomes familiar with their faces and persons, as a part of the street-furniture.

There is one curious circumstance, that all city-people must have noticed, which is often illustrated in our experience of the slack-water gentry. We shall know a certain person by his looks, familiarly, for years, but never have learned his name. About this person we shall have accumulated no little circumstantial knowledge ; — thus, his face, figure, gait, his mode of dressing, of sa-

luting, perhaps even of speaking, may be familiar to us; yet who he is we know not. In another department of our consciousness, there is a very familiar *name*, which we have never found the person to match. We have heard it so often, that it has idealized itself, and become one of that multitude of permanent shapes which walk the chambers of the brain in velvet slippers in the company of Falstaff and Hamlet and General Washington and Mr. Pickwick. Sometimes the person dies, but the name lives on indefinitely. But now and then it happens, perhaps after years of this independent existence of the name and its shadowy image in the brain, on the one part, and the person and all its real attributes, as we see them daily, on the other, that some accident reveals their relation, and we find the name we have carried so long in our memory belongs to the person we have known so long as a fellow-citizen. Now the slack-water gentry are among the persons most likely to be the subjects of this curious divorce of title and reality, — for the reason, that, playing no important part in the community, there is nothing to tie the floating name to the actual individual, as is the case with the men who belong in any way to the public, while yet their names have a certain historical currency, and we cannot help meeting them, either in their haunts, or going to and from them.

To this class belonged Wentworth Langdon, Esq. He had been "dead-headed" into the world

some fifty years ago, and had sat with his hands in his pockets staring at the show ever since. I shall not tell you, for reasons before hinted, the whole name of the place in which he lived. I will only point you in the right direction, by saying that there are three towns lying in a line with each other, as you go "down East," each of them with a *Port* in its name, and each of them having a peculiar interest which gives it individuality, in addition to the Oriental character they have in common. I need not tell you that these towns are Newburyport, Portsmouth, and Portland. The Oriental character they have in common consists in their large, square, palatial mansions, with sunny gardens round them. The two first have seen better days. They are in perfect harmony with the condition of weakened, but not impoverished, gentility. Each of them is a "paradise of demi-fortunes." Each of them is of that intermediate size between a village and a city which any place has outgrown when the presence of a well-dressed stranger walking up and down the main street ceases to be a matter of public curiosity and private speculation, as frequently happens, during the busier months of the year, in considerable commercial centres like Salem. They both have grand old recollections to fall back upon,—times when they looked forward to commercial greatness, and when the portly gentlemen in cocked hats, who built their now decaying wharves and sent out their ships all over

the world, dreamed that their fast-growing port was to be the Tyre or the Carthage of the rich British Colony. Great houses, like that once lived in by Lord Timothy Dexter, in Newburyport, remain as evidence of the fortunes amassed in these places of old. Other mansions—like the Rockingham House in Portsmouth (look at the white horse's tail before you mount the broad staircase) show that there was not only wealth, but style and state, in these quiet old towns during the last century. It is not with any thought of pity or depreciation that we speak of them as in a certain sense decayed towns; they did not fulfil their early promise of expansion, but they remain incomparably the most interesting places of their size in any of the three northernmost New England States. They have even now prosperity enough to keep them in good condition, and offer the most attractive residences for quiet families, which, if they had been English, would have lived in a *palazzo* at Genoa or Pisa, or some other Continental Newburyport or Portsmouth.

As for the last of the three Ports, or Portland, it is getting too prosperous to be as attractive as its less northerly neighbors. Meant for a fine old town, to ripen like a Cheshire cheese within its walls of ancient rind, burrowed by crooked alleys and mottled with venerable mould, it seems likely to sacrifice its mellow future to a vulgar material prosperity. Still it remains invested with many of its old charms, as yet, and

will forfeit its place among this admirable trio only when it gets a hotel with unequivocal marks of having been built and organized in the present century.

— It was one of the old square palaces of the North, in which Bernard Langdon, the son of Wentworth, was born. If he had had the luck to be an only child, he might have lived as his father had done, letting his meagre competence smoulder on almost without consuming, like the fuel in an air-tight stove. But after Master Bernard came Miss Dorothea Elizabeth Wentworth Langdon, and then Master William Pepperell Langdon, and others, equally well named,— a string of them, looking, when they stood in a row in prayer-time, as if they would fit a set of Pandean pipes, of from three feet upward in dimensions. The door of the air-tight stove has to be opened, under such circumstances, you may well suppose! So it happened that our young man had been obliged, from an early period, to do something to support himself, and found himself stopped short in his studies by the inability of the good people at home to furnish him the present means of support as a student.

You will understand now why the young man wanted me to give him a certificate of his fitness to teach, and why I did not choose to urge him to accept the aid which a meek country-boy from a family without ante-Revolutionary

recollections would have thankfully received. Go he must, — that was plain enough. He would not be content otherwise. He was not, however, to give up his studies; and as it is customary to allow *half-time* to students engaged in school-keeping, — that is, to count a year, so employed, if the student also keep on with his professional studies, as equal to six months of the three years he is expected to be under an instructor before applying for his degree, — he would not necessarily lose more than a few months of time. He had a small library of professional books, which he could take with him.

So he left my teaching and that of my estimable colleagues, carrying with him my certificate, that Mr. Bernard C. Langdon was a young gentleman of excellent moral character, of high intelligence and good education, and that his services would be of great value in any school, academy, or other institution, where young persons of either sex were to be instructed.

I confess, that expression, "either sex," ran a little thick, as I may say, from my pen. For, although the young man bore a very fair character, and there was no special cause for doubting his discretion, I considered him altogether too good-looking, in the first place, to be let loose in a room-full of young girls. I didn't want him to fall in love just then, — and if half a dozen girls fell in love with him, as they most assuredly would, if brought into too near relations with

him, why, there was no telling what gratitude and natural sensibility might bring about.

Certificates are, for the most part, like ostrich-eggs; the giver never knows what is hatched out of them. But once in a thousand times they act as curses are said to,—come home to roost. Give them often enough, until it gets to be a mechanical business, and, some day or other, you will get caught warranting somebody's ice not to melt in any climate, or somebody's razors to be safe in the hands of the youngest children.

I had an uneasy feeling, after giving this certificate. It might be all right enough; but if it happened to end badly, I should always reproach myself. There was a chance, certainly, that it would lead him or others into danger or wretchedness. Any one who looked at this young man could not fail to see that he was capable of fascinating and being fascinated. Those large, dark eyes of his would sink into the white soul of a young girl as the black cloth sunk into the snow in Franklin's famous experiment. Or, on the other hand, if the rays of a passionate nature should ever be concentrated on them, they would be absorbed into the very depths of his nature, and then his blood would turn to flame and burn his life out of him, until his cheeks grew as white as the ashes that cover a burning coal.

I wish I had not said *either sex* in my certificate. An academy for young gentlemen, now; that sounds cool and unimaginative. A boys' school;

that would be a very good place for him;—some of them are pretty rough, but there is nerve enough in that old Wentworth strain of blood; he can give any country fellow, of the common stock, twenty pounds, and hit him out of time in ten minutes. But to send such a young fellow as that out a girl's-nesting! to give this falcon a free pass into all the dove-cotes! I was a fool,—that's all.

I brooded over the mischief which might come out of these two words until it seemed to me that they were charged with destiny. I could hardly sleep for thinking what a train I might have been laying, which might take a spark any day, and blow up nobody knows whose peace or prospects. What I dreaded most was one of those miserable matrimonial misalliances where a young fellow who does not know himself as yet flings his magnificent future into the checked apron-lap of some fresh-faced, half-bred country-girl, no more fit to be mated with him than her father's horse to go in double harness with Flora Temple. To think of the eagle's wings being clipped so that he shall never lift himself over the farm-yard fence! Such things happen, and always must,—because, as one of us said awhile ago, a man always loves a woman, and a woman a man, unless some good reason exists to the contrary. You think yourself a very fastidious young man, my friend; but there are probably at least five thousand young women in these United

States, any one of whom you would certainly marry, if you were thrown much into her company, and nobody more attractive were near, and she had no objection. And you, my dear young lady, justly pride yourself on your discerning delicacy; but if I should say that there are twenty thousand young men, any one of whom, if he offered his hand and heart under favorable circumstances, you would

“First endure, then pity, then embrace,”

I should be much more imprudent than I mean to be, and you would, no doubt, throw down a story in which I hope to interest you.

I had settled it in my mind that this young fellow had a career marked out for him. He should begin in the natural way, by taking care of poor patients in one of the public charities, and work his way up to a better kind of practice, — better, that is, in the vulgar, worldly sense. The great and good Boerhaave used to say, as I remember very well, that the poor were his best patients; for God was their paymaster. But everybody is not as patient as Boerhaave, nor as deserving; so that the rich, though not, perhaps, the best patients, are good enough for common practitioners. I suppose Boerhaave put up with them when he could not get poor ones, as he left his daughter two millions of florins when he died.

Now if this young man once got into the *wide streets*, he would sweep them clear of his rivals of

the same standing ; and as I was getting indifferent to business, and old Dr. Kilham was growing careless, and had once or twice prescribed morphine when he meant quinine, there would soon be an opening into the Doctor's Paradise, — the *streets with only one side to them*. Then I would have him strike a bold stroke, — set up a nice little coach, and be driven round like a first-class London doctor, instead of coasting about in a shabby one-horse concern and casting anchor opposite his patients' doors like a Cape-Ann fishing-smack. By the time he was thirty, he would have knocked the social pawns out of his way, and be ready to challenge a wife from the row of great pieces in the background. I would not have a man marry above his level, so as to become the appendage of a powerful family-connection ; but I would not have him marry until he knew his level, — that is, again, looking at the matter in a purely worldly point of view, and not taking the sentiments at all into consideration. But remember, that a young man, using large endowments wisely and fortunately, may put himself on a level with the highest in the land in ten brilliant years of spirited, unflagging labor. And to stand at the very top of your calling in a great city is something in itself, — that is, if you like money and influence, and a seat on the platform at public lectures, and gratuitous tickets to all sorts of places where you don't want to go, and, what is a good deal better than any of these things, a

sense of power, limited, it may be, but absolute in its range, so that all the Cæsars and Napoleons would have to stand aside, if they came between you and the exercise of your special vocation.

That is what I thought this young fellow might have come to; and now I have let him go off into the country with my certificate, that he is fit to teach in a school for either sex! Ten to one he will run like a moth into a candle, right into one of those girls'-nests, and get tangled up in some sentimental folly or other, and there will be the end of him. Oh, yes! country doctor,—half a dollar a visit,—ride, ride, ride all day,—get up at night and harness your own horse,—ride again ten miles in a snow-storm,—shake powders out of two phials, (*pulv. glycyrrhiz.*, *pulv. gum. acac. aa partes equales*,)—ride back again, if you don't happen to get stuck in a drift,—no home, no peace, no continuous meals, no unbroken sleep, no Sunday, no holiday, no social intercourse, but one eternal jog, jog, jog, in a sulky, until you feel like the mummy of an Indian who had been buried in the sitting posture, and was dug up a hundred years afterwards! Why didn't I warn him about love and all that nonsense? Why didn't I tell him he had nothing to do with it, yet awhile? Why didn't I hold up to him those awful examples I could have cited, where poor young fellows who could just keep themselves afloat have hung a matrimonial millstone round their necks, taking it for a life-preserver?

All this of two words in a certificate!

CHAPTER III.

MR. BERNARD TRIES HIS HAND.

WHETHER the Student advertised for a school, or whether he fell in with the advertisement of a school-committee, is not certain. At any rate, it was not long before he found himself the head of a large district, or, as it was called by the inhabitants, "deestric" school, in the flourishing inland village of Pequawkett, or, as it is commonly spelt, Pigwacket Centre. The natives of this place would be surprised, if they should hear that any of the readers of a work published in Boston were unacquainted with so remarkable a locality. As, however, some copies of it may be read at a distance from this distinguished metropolis, it may be well to give a few particulars respecting the place, taken from the Universal Gazetteer.

"PIGWACKET, sometimes spelt Pequawkett. A post-village and township in — Co., State of —, situated in a fine agricultural region, 2 thriving villages, Pigwacket Centre and Smithville, 3 churches, several school-houses, and many handsome private residences. Mink River runs through the town, navigable for small boats after heavy rains. Muddy Pond at

N. E. section, well stocked with horn pouts, eels, and shiners. Products, beef, pork, butter, cheese. Manufactures, shoe-pegs, clothes-pins, and tin-ware. Pop. 1873."

- The reader may think there is nothing very remarkable implied in this description. If, however, he had read the town-history, by the Rev. Jabez Grubb, he would have learned, that, like the celebrated Little Pedlington, it was distinguished by many *very* remarkable advantages. Thus:—

"The situation of Pigwacket is eminently beautiful, looking down the lovely valley of Mink River, a tributary of the Musquash. The air is salubrious, and many of the inhabitants have attained great age, several having passed the allotted period of 'three-score years and ten' before succumbing to any of the various 'ills that flesh is heir to.' Widow Comfort Leevins died in 1836, *Æt.* LXXXVII. years. Venus, an African, died in 1841, supposed to be C. years old. The people are distinguished for intelligence, as has been frequently remarked by eminent lyceum-lecturers, who have invariably spoken in the highest terms of a Pigwacket audience. There is a public library, containing nearly a hundred volumes, free to all subscribers. The preached word is well attended, there is a flourishing temperance society, and the schools are excellent. It is a residence admirably adapted to refined families who relish the beauties of Nature and the charms of society. The Honorable John Smith, formerly a member of the State Senate, was a native of this town."

That is the way they all talk. After all, it is probably pretty much like other inland New England towns in point of "salubrity,"—that is, gives people their choice of dysentery or fever every au-

turnn, with a season-ticket for consumption, good all the year round. And so of the other pretences. "Pigwacket audience," forsooth! Was there ever an audience anywhere, though there wasn't a pair of eyes in it brighter than pickled oysters, that didn't think it was "distinguished for intelligence"? — "The preachèd word"! That means the Rev. Jabez Grubb's sermons. "Temperance society"! "Excellent schools"! Ah, that is just what we were talking about.

The truth was, that District No. 1, Pigwacket Centre, had had a good deal of trouble of late with its schoolmasters. The committee had done their best, but there were a number of well-grown and pretty rough young fellows who had got the upperhand of the masters, and meant to keep it. Two dynasties had fallen before the uprising of this fierce democracy. This was a thing that used to be not very uncommon; but in so "intelligent" a community as that of Pigwacket Centre, in an era of public libraries and lyceum-lectures, it was portentous and alarming.

The rebellion began under the ferule of Master Weeks, a slender youth from a country college, under-fed, thin-blooded, sloping-shouldered, knock-kneed, straight-haired, weak-bearded, pale-eyed, wide-pupilled, half-colored; a common type enough in in-door races, not rich enough to pick and choose in their alliances. Nature kills off a good many of this sort in the first teething-time, a few in later childhood, a good many again in

early adolescence; but every now and then one runs the gauntlet of her various diseases, or rather forms of one disease, and grows up, as Master Weeks had done.

It was a very foolish thing for him to try to inflict personal punishment on such a lusty young fellow as Abner Briggs, Junior, one of the "hardest customers" in the way of a rough-and-tumble fight that there were anywhere round. No doubt he had been insolent, but it would have been better to overlook it. It pains me to report the events which took place when the master made his rash attempt to maintain his authority. Abner Briggs, Junior, was a great, hulking fellow, who had been bred to butchering, but urged by his parents to attend school, in order to learn the elegant accomplishments of reading and writing, in which he was sadly deficient. He was in the habit of talking and laughing pretty loud in school-hours, of throwing wads of paper reduced to a pulp by a natural and easy process, of occasional insolence and general negligence. One of the soft, but unpleasant missiles just alluded to, flew by the master's head one morning, and flattened itself against the wall, where it adhered in the form of a convex mass in *alto rilievo*. The master looked round and saw the young butcher's arm in an attitude which pointed to it unequivocally as the source from which the projectile had taken its flight.

Master Weeks turned pale. He must "lick" Abner Briggs, Junior, or abdicate. So he determined to lick Abner Briggs, Junior.

"Come here, Sir!" he said; "you have insulted me and outraged the decency of the school-room often enough! Hold out your hand!"

The young fellow grinned and held it out. The master struck at it with his black ruler, with a will in the blow and a snapping of the eyes, as much as to say that he meant to make him smart this time. The young fellow pulled his hand back as the ruler came down, and the master hit himself a vicious blow with it on the right knee. There are things no man can stand. The master caught the refractory youth by the collar and began shaking him, or rather shaking himself against him.

"Le' go o' that are cōat, naow," said the fellow, "or I'll make ye! 'T'll take tew on ye t' handle me, I tell ye, 'n' then ye caänt dew it!"—and the young pupil returned the master's attention by catching hold of *his* collar.

When it comes to that, the *best man*, not exactly in the moral sense, but rather in the material, and more especially the muscular point of view, is very apt to have the best of it, irrespectively of the merits of the case. So it happened now. The unfortunate schoolmaster found himself taking the measure of the sanded floor, amidst the general uproar of the school. From that moment his ferule was broken, and the school-committee very soon had a vacancy to fill.

Master Pigeon, the successor of Master Weeks, was of better stature, but loosely put together,

and slender-limbed. A dreadfully nervous kind of man he was, walked on tiptoe, started at sudden noises, was distressed when he heard a whisper, had a quick, suspicious look, and was always saying, "Hush!" and putting his hands to his ears. The boys were not long in finding out this nervous weakness, of course. In less than a week a regular system of torments was inaugurated, full of the most diabolical malice and ingenuity. The exercises of the conspirators varied from day to day, but consisted mainly of foot-scraping, solos on the slate-pencil, (making it *screech* on the slate,) falling of heavy books, attacks of coughing, banging of desk-lids, boot-creaking, with sounds as of drawing a cork from time to time, followed by suppressed chuckles.

Master Pigeon grew worse and worse under these inflictions. The rascally boys always had an excuse for any one trick they were caught at. "Couldn' help coughin', Sir." "Slipped out o' m' han', Sir." "Didn' go to, Sir." "Didn' dew 't o' purpose, Sir." And so on,—always the best of reasons for the most outrageous of behavior. The master weighed himself at the grocer's on a platform balance, some ten days after he began keeping the school. At the end of a week he weighed himself again. He had lost two pounds. At the end of another week he had lost five. He made a little calculation, based on these data, from which he learned that in a certain number of months, going on at this rate, he should come

to weigh precisely nothing at all; and as this was a sum in subtraction he did not care to work out in practice, Master Pigeon took to himself wings and left the school-committee in possession of a letter of resignation and a vacant place to fill once more.

This was the school to which Mr. Bernard Langdon found himself appointed as master. He accepted the place conditionally, with the understanding that he should leave it at the end of a month, if he were tired of it.

The advent of Master Langdon to Pigwacket Centre created a much more lively sensation than had attended that of either of his predecessors. Looks go a good way all the world over, and though there were several good-looking people in the place, and Major Bush was what the natives of the town called a "hahnsome mahn," that is, big, fat, and red, yet the sight of a really elegant young fellow, with the natural air which grows up with carefully-bred young persons, was a novelty. The Brahmin blood which came from his grandfather as well as from his mother, a direct descendant of the old Flynt family, well known by the famous tutor, Henty Flynt, (see Cat. Harv. Anno 1693,) had been enlivened and enriched by that of the Wentworths, which had had a good deal of ripe old Madeira and other generous elements mingled with it, so that it ran to gout sometimes in the old folks, and to high spirit, warm complexion, and curly hair in some

of the younger ones. The soft curling hair Mr. Bernard had inherited, — something, perhaps, of the high spirit; but that we shall have a chance of finding out by-and-by. But the long sermons and the frugal board of his Brahmin ancestry, with his own habits of study, had told upon his color, which was subdued to something more of delicacy than one would care to see in a young fellow with rough work before him. This, however, made him look more interesting, or, as the young ladies at Major Bush's said, "interéstin'."

When Mr. Bernard showed himself at meeting, on the first Sunday after his arrival, it may be supposed that a good many eyes were turned upon the young schoolmaster. There was something heroic in his coming forward so readily to take a place which called for a strong hand, and a prompt, steady will to guide it. In fact, his position was that of a military chieftain on the eve of a battle. Everybody knew everything in Pigwacket Centre; and it was an understood thing that the young rebels meant to put down the new master, if they could. It was natural that the two prettiest girls in the village, called in the local dialect, as nearly as our limited alphabet will represent it, Alminy Cutterr, and Arvilly Braowne, should feel and express an interest in the good-looking stranger, and that, when their flattering comments were repeated in the hearing of their indigenous admirers, among whom were some of the older "boys" of the school, it

should not add to the amiable dispositions of the turbulent youth.

Monday came, and the new schoolmaster was in his chair at the upper end of the schoolhouse, on the raised platform. - The rustics looked at his handsome face, thoughtful, peaceful, pleasant, cheerful, but sharply cut round the lips and proudly lighted about the eyes. The ringleader of the mischief-makers, the young butcher who has before figured in this narrative, looked at him stealthily, whenever he got a chance to study him unobserved ; for the truth was, he felt uncomfortable, whenever he found the large, dark eyes fixed on his own little, sharp, deep-set, gray ones. But he managed to study him pretty well, — first his face, then his neck and shoulders, the set of his arms, the narrowing at the loins, the make of his legs, and the way he moved. In short, he examined him as he would have examined a steer, to see what he could do and how he would cut up. If he could only have gone to him and felt of his muscles, he would have been entirely satisfied. He was not a very wise youth, but he did know well enough, that, though big arms and legs are very good things, there is something besides size that goes to make a man ; and he had heard stories of a fighting-man, called "The Spider," from his attenuated proportions, who was yet a terrible hitter in the ring, and had whipped many a big-limbed fellow, in and out of the roped arena.

Nothing could be smoother than the way in which everything went on for the first day or two. The new master was so kind and courteous, he seemed to take everything in such a natural, easy way, that there was no chance to pick a quarrel with him. He in the mean time thought it best to watch the boys and young men for a day or two with as little show of authority as possible. It was easy enough to see that he would have occasion for it before long.

The schoolhouse was a grim, old, red, one-story building, perched on a bare rock at the top of a hill,—partly because this was a conspicuous site for the temple of learning, and partly because land is cheap where there is no chance even for rye or buckwheat, and the very sheep find nothing to nibble. About the little porch were carved initials and dates, at various heights, from the stature of nine to that of eighteen. Inside were old unpainted desks,—unpainted, but browned with the umber of human contact,—and hacked by innumerable jack-knives. It was long since the walls had been whitewashed, as might be conjectured by the various traces left upon them, wherever idle hands or sleepy heads could reach them. A curious appearance was noticeable on various higher parts of the wall, namely, a wart-like eruption, as one would be tempted to call it, being in reality a crop of the soft missiles before mentioned, which, adhering in considerable numbers, and hardening after the

usual fashion of *papier maché*, formed at last permanent ornaments of the edifice.

The young master's quick eye soon noticed that a particular part of the wall was most favored with these ornamental appendages. Their position pointed sufficiently clearly to the part of the room they came from. In fact, there was a nest of young mutineers just there, which must be broken up by a *coup d'état*. This was easily effected by redistributing the seats and arranging the scholars according to classes, so that a mischievous fellow, charged full of the rebellious imponderable, should find himself between two non-conductors, in the shape of small boys of studious habits. It was managed quietly enough, in such a plausible sort of way that its motive was not thought of. But its effects were soon felt; and then began a system of correspondence by signs, and the throwing of little scrawls done up in pellets, and announced by preliminary *a'h'ms!* to call the attention of the distant youth addressed. Some of these were incendiary documents, devoting the schoolmaster to the lower divinities, as "a — stuck-up dandy," as "a — purse-proud aristocrat," as "a — sight too big for his, etc.," and holding him up in a variety of equally forcible phrases to the indignation of the youthful community of School District No. 1, Pigwacket Centre.

Presently the draughtsman of the school set a caricature in circulation, labelled, to prevent

mistakes, with the schoolmaster's name. An immense bell-crowned hat, and a long, pointed, swallow-tailed coat showed that the artist had in his mind the conventional dandy, as shown in prints of thirty or forty years ago, rather than any actual human aspect of the time. But it was passed round among the boys and made its laugh, helping of course to undermine the master's authority, as "Punch" or the "Charivari" takes the dignity out of an obnoxious minister. One morning, on going to the schoolroom, Master Langdon found an enlarged copy of this sketch, with its label, pinned on the door. He took it down, smiled a little, put it into his pocket, and entered the schoolroom. An insidious silence prevailed, which looked as if some plot were brewing. The boys were ripe for mischief, but afraid. They had really no fault to find with the master, except that he was dressed like a gentleman, which a certain class of fellows always consider a personal insult to themselves. But the older ones were evidently plotting, and more than once the warning *a'h'm!* was heard, and a dirty little scrap of paper rolled into a wad shot from one seat to another. One of these happened to strike the stove-funnel, and lodged on the master's desk. He was cool enough not to seem to notice it. He secured it, however, and found an opportunity to look at it, without being observed by the boys. It required no *immediate* notice.

He who should have enjoyed the privilege of looking upon Mr. Bernard Langdon the next morning, when his toilet was about half finished, would have had a very pleasant gratuitous exhibition. First he buckled the strap of his trousers pretty tightly. Then he took up a pair of heavy dumb-bells, and swung them for a few minutes; then two great "Indian clubs," with which he enacted all sorts of impossible-looking feats. His limbs were not very large, nor his shoulders remarkably broad; but if you knew as much of the muscles as all persons who look at statues and pictures with a critical eye ought to have learned,—if you knew the *trapezius*, lying diamond-shaped over the back and shoulders like a monk's cowl,—or the *deltoid*, which caps the shoulder like an epaulette,—or the *triceps*, which furnishes the *calf* of the upper arm,—or the hard-knotted *biceps*,—any of the great sculptural landmarks, in fact,—you would have said there was a pretty show of them, beneath the white satiny skin of Mr. Bernard Langdon. And if you had seen him, when he had laid down the Indian clubs, catch hold of a leather strap that hung from the beam of the old-fashioned ceiling, and lift and lower himself over and over again by his left hand alone, you might have thought it a very simple and easy thing to do, until you tried to do it yourself.—Mr. Bernard looked at himself with the eye of an expert. "Pretty well!" he said;—"not so much fallen off as I expected." Then

he set up his bolster in a very knowing sort of way, and delivered two or three blows straight as rulers and swift as winks. "That will do," he said. Then, as if determined to make a certainty of his condition, he took a dynamometer from one of the drawers in his old veneered bureau. First he squeezed it with his two hands. Then he placed it on the floor and lifted, steadily, strongly. The springs creaked and cracked; the index swept with a great stride far up into the high figures of the scale; it was a good lift. He was satisfied. He sat down on the edge of his bed and looked at his cleanly-shaped arms. "If I strike one of those boobies, I am afraid I shall spoil him," he said. Yet this young man, when weighed with his class at the college, could barely turn one hundred and forty-two pounds in the scale,—not a heavy weight, surely; but some of the middle weights, as the present English champion, for instance, seem to be of a far finer quality of muscle than the bulkier fellows.

The master took his breakfast with a good appetite that morning, but was perhaps rather more quiet than usual. After breakfast he went up-stairs and put on a light loose frock, instead of his usual dress-coat, which was a close-fitting and rather stylish one. On his way to school he met Alminy Cutterr, who happened to be walking in the other direction. "Good morning, Miss Cutter," he said; for she and another

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young lady had been introduced to him, on a former occasion, in the usual phrase of polite society in presenting ladies to gentlemen,—"Mr. Langdon, let me make y' acquainted with Miss Cutterr;—let me make y' acquainted with Miss Braowne." So he said, "Good morning"; to which she replied, "Good mornin', Mr. Langdon. Haow's your haälth?" The answer to this question ought naturally to have been the end of the talk; but Alminy Cutterr lingered and looked as if she had something more on her mind.

A young fellow does not require a great experience to read a simple country-girl's face as if it were a signboard. Alminy was a good soul, with red cheeks and bright eyes, kind-hearted as she could be, and it was out of the question for her to hide her thoughts or feelings like a fine lady. Her bright eyes were moist and her red cheeks paler than their wont, as she said, with her lips quivering,—“Oh, Mr. Langdon, them boys 'll be the death of ye, if ye don't take caär!”

“Why, what's the matter, my dear?” said Mr. Bernard.—Don't think there was anything very odd in that “my dear,” at the second interview with a village belle;—some of these woman-tamers call a girl “My dear,” after five minutes' acquaintance, and it sounds all right *as they say it*. But you had better not try it at a venture.

It sounded all right to Alminy, as Mr. Bernard

said it. — "I'll tell ye what's the mahtterr," she said, in a frightened voice. "Ahbner's go'n' to car' his dog, 'n' he 'll set him on ye 'z sure 'z y' 'r' alive. 'T 's the same cretur that haäf ēat up Eben Squires's little Jo, a year come nex' Faäst-day."

Now this last statement was undoubtedly over-colored; as little Jo Squires was running about the village, — with an ugly scar on his arm, it is true, where the beast had caught him with his teeth, on the occasion of the child's taking liberties with him, as he had been accustomed to do with a good-tempered Newfoundland dog, who seemed to like being pulled and hauled round by children. After this the creature was commonly muzzled, and, as he was fed on raw meat chiefly, was always ready for a fight, — which he was occasionally indulged in, when anything stout enough to match him could be found in any of the neighboring villages.

Tiger, or, more briefly, Tige, the property of Abner Briggs, Junior, belonged to a species not distinctly named in scientific books, but well known to our country-folks under the name "Yallah dog." They do not use this expression as they would say *black* dog or *white* dog, but with almost as definite a meaning as when they speak of a terrier or a spaniel. A "yallah dog," is a large canine brute, of a dingy old-flannel color, of no particular breed except his own, who hangs round a tavern or a butcher's

shop, or trots alongside of a team, looking as if he were disgusted with the world, and the world with him. Our inland population, while they tolerate him, speak of him with contempt. Old —, of Meredith Bridge, used to twit the sun for not shining on cloudy days, swearing, that, if he hung up his "yallah dog," he would make a better show of daylight. A country fellow, abusing a horse of his neighbor's, vowed, that, "if he had such a hoss, he'd swap him for a 'yallah dog,' — and then shoot the dog."

Tige was an ill-conditioned brute by nature, and art had not improved him by cropping his ears and tail and investing him with a spiked collar. He bore on his person, also, various not ornamental scars, marks of old battles; for Tige had fight in him, as was said before, and as might be guessed by a certain bluntness about the muzzle, with a projection of the lower jaw, which looked as if there might be a bull-dog stripe among the numerous bar-sinisters of his lineage.

It was hardly fair, however, to leave Alminy Cutterr waiting while this piece of natural history was telling. — As she spoke of little Jo, who had been "haäf ēat up" by Tige, she could not contain her sympathies, and began to cry.

"Why, my dear little soul," said Mr. Bernard, "what are you worried about? I used to play with a *bear* when I was a boy; and the bear used to hug me, and I used to kiss him, — so!"

It was too bad of Mr. Bernard, only the second time he had seen Alminy; but her kind feelings had touched him, and that seemed the most natural way of expressing his gratitude. Alminy looked round to see if anybody was near; she saw nobody, so of course it would do no good to "holler." She saw nobody; but a stout young fellow, leading a yellow dog, muzzled, saw *her* through a crack in a picket fence, not a great way off the road. Many a year he had been "hangin' 'raoun'" Alminy, and never did he see any encouraging look, or hear any "Behave, naow!" or "Come, naow, a'n't ye 'shamed?" or other forbidding phrase of acquiescence, such as village belles understand as well as ever did the nymph who fled to the willows in the eclogue we all remember.

No wonder he was furious, when he saw the schoolmaster, who had never seen the girl until within a week, touching with his lips those rosy cheeks which he had never dared to approach. But that was all; it was a sudden impulse; and the master turned away from the young girl, laughing, and telling her not to fret herself about him,— he would take care of himself.

So Master Langdon walked on toward his schoolhouse, not displeased, perhaps, with his little adventure, nor immensely elated by it; for he was one of the natural class of the sex-subduers, and had had many a smile without asking, which had been denied to the feeble youth who try to

win favor by pleading their passion in rhyme, and even to the more formidable approaches of young officers in volunteer companies, considered by many to be quite irresistible to the fair who have once beheld them from their windows in the epaulettes and plumes and sashes of the "Pig-wacket Invincibles," or the "Hackmatack Rangers."

Master Langdon took his seat and began the exercises of his school. The smaller boys recited their lessons well enough, but some of the larger ones were negligent and surly. He noticed one or two of them looking toward the door, as if expecting somebody or something in that direction. At half past nine o'clock, Abner Briggs, Junior, who had not yet shown himself, made his appearance. He was followed by his "yallah dog," without his muzzle, who squatted down very grimly near the door, and gave a wolfish look round the room, as if he were considering which was the plumpest boy to begin with. The young butcher, meanwhile, went to his seat, looking somewhat flushed, except round the lips, which were hardly as red as common, and set pretty sharply.

"Put out that dog, Abner Briggs!" — The master spoke as the captain speaks to the helmsman, when there are rocks foaming at the lips, right under his lee.

Abner Briggs answered as the helmsman answers, when he knows he has a mutinous crew

round him that mean to run the ship on the reef, and is one of the mutineers himself. "Put him aout y'rself, 'f ye a'n't afeard on him!"

The master stepped into the aisle. The great cur showed his teeth, — and the devilish instincts of his old wolf-ancestry looked out of his eyes, and flashed from his sharp tusks, and yawned in his wide mouth and deep red gullet.

The movements of animals are so much quicker than those of human beings commonly are, that they avoid blows as easily as one of us steps out of the way of an ox-cart. It must be a very stupid dog that lets himself be run over by a fast driver in his gig; he can jump out of the wheel's way after the tire has already touched him. So, while one is lifting a stick to strike or drawing back his foot to kick, the beast makes his spring, and the blow or the kick comes too late.

It was not so this time. The master was a fencer, and something of a boxer; he had played at single-stick, and was used to watching an adversary's eye and coming down on him without any of those premonitory symptoms by which unpractised persons show long beforehand what mischief they meditate.

"Out with you!" he said, fiercely, — and explained what he meant by a sudden flash of his foot that clashed the yellow dog's white teeth together like the springing of a bear-trap. The cur knew he had found his master at the first word and glance, as low animals on four legs, or a

smaller number, always do; and the blow took him so by surprise, that it curled him up in an instant, and he went bundling out of the open schoolhouse-door with a most pitiable yelp, and his stump of a tail shut down as close as his owner ever shut the short, stubbed blade of his jack-knife.

It was time for the other cur to find who his master was.

"Follow your dog, Abner Briggs!" said Master Langdon.

The stout butcher-youth looked round, but the rebels were all cowed and sat still.

"I'll go when I'm ready," he said, — "'n' I guess I won't go afore I'm ready."

"You're ready now," said Master Langdon, turning up his cuffs so that the little boys noticed the yellow gleam of a pair of gold sleeve-buttons, once worn by Colonel Percy Wentworth, famous in the Old French War.

Abner Briggs, Junior, did not apparently think he was ready, at any rate; for he rose up in his place, and stood with clenched fists, defiant, as the master strode towards him. The master knew the fellow was really frightened, for all his looks, and that he must have no time to rally. So he caught him suddenly by the collar, and, with one great pull, had him out over his desk and on the open floor. He gave him a sharp fling backwards and stood looking at him.

The rough-and-tumble fighters all *clinch*, as

everybody knows; and Abner Briggs, Junior, was one of that kind. He remembered how he had floored Master Weeks, and he had just "spunk" enough left in him to try to repeat his former successful experiment on the new master. He sprang at him, open-handed, to clutch him. So the master had to strike,—once, but very hard, and just in the place to tell. No doubt, the authority that doth hedge a schoolmaster added to the effect of the blow; but the blow was itself a neat one, and did not require to be repeated.

"Now go home," said the master, "and don't let me see you or your dog here again." And he turned his cuffs down over the gold sleeve-buttons.

This finished the great Pigwacket Centre School rebellion. What could be done with a master who was so pleasant as long as the boys behaved decently, and such a terrible fellow when he got "riled," as they called it? In a week's time, everything was reduced to order, and the school-committee were delighted. The master, however, had received a proposition so much more agreeable and advantageous, that he informed the committee he should leave at the end of his month, having in his eye a sensible and energetic young college-graduate who would be willing and fully competent to take his place.

So, at the expiration of the appointed time, Bernard Langdon, late master of the School District No. 1, Pigwacket Centre, took his departure

from that place for another locality, whither we shall follow him, carrying with him the regrets of the committee, of most of the scholars, and of several young ladies; also two locks of hair, sent unbeknown to payrents, one dark and one warmish auburn, inscribed with the respective initials of Alminy Cutterr and Arvilly Braowne.

CHAPTER IV.

THE MOTH FLIES INTO THE CANDLE.

THE invitation which Mr. Bernard Langdon had accepted came from the Board of Trustees of the "Apollinean Female Institute," a school for the education of young ladies, situated in the flourishing town of Rockland. This was an establishment on a considerable scale, in which a hundred scholars or thereabouts were taught the ordinary English branches, several of the modern languages, something of Latin, if desired, with a little natural philosophy, metaphysics, and rhetoric, to finish off with in the last year, and music at any time when they would pay for it. At the close of their career in the Institute, they were submitted to a grand public examination, and received diplomas tied in blue ribbons, which proclaimed them with a great flourish of capitals to be graduates of the Apollinean Female Institute.

Rockland was a town of no inconsiderable pretensions. It was ennobled by lying at the foot of a mountain, — called by the working-folks of the place "*the* Maounting," — which sufficiently showed that it was the principal high land of the

district in which it was situated. It lay to the south of this, and basked in the sunshine as Italy stretches herself before the Alps. To pass from the town of Tamarack on the north of the mountain to Rockland on the south was like crossing from Coire to Chiavenna.

There is nothing gives glory and grandeur and romance and mystery to a place like the impending presence of a high mountain. Our beautiful Northampton with its fair meadows and noble stream is lovely enough, but owes its surpassing attraction to those twin summits which brood over it like living presences, looking down into its streets as if they were its tutelary divinities, dressing and undressing their green shrines, robing themselves in jubilant sunshine or in sorrowing clouds, and doing penance in the snowy shroud of winter, as if they had living hearts under their rocky ribs and changed their mood like the children of the soil at their feet, who grow up under their almost parental smiles and frowns. Happy is the child whose first dreams of heaven are blended with the evening glories of Mount Holyoke, when the sun is firing its treetops, and gilding the white walls that mark its one human dwelling! If the other and the wilder of the two summits has a scowl of terror in its overhanging brows, yet is it a pleasing fear to look upon its savage solitudes through the barred nursery-windows in the heart of the sweet, companionable village. — And how the mountains

love their children! The sea is of a facile virtue, and will run to kiss the first comer in any port he visits; but the chaste mountains sit apart, and show their faces only in the midst of their own families.

The Mountain which kept watch to the north of Rockland lay waste and almost inviolate through much of its domain. The catamount still glared from the branches of its old hemlocks on the lesser beasts that strayed beneath him. It was not long since a wolf had wandered down, famished in the winter's dearth, and left a few bones and some tufts of wool of what had been a lamb in the morning. Nay, there were broad-footed tracks in the snow only two years previously, which could not be mistaken;—the black bear alone could have set that plantigrade seal, and little children must come home early from school and play, for he is an indiscriminate feeder when he is hungry, and a little child would not come amiss when other game was wanting.

But these occasional visitors may have been mere wanderers, which, straying along in the woods by day, and perhaps stalking through the streets of still villages by night, had worked their way along down from the ragged mountain-spurs of higher latitudes. The one feature of The Mountain that shed the brownest horror on its woods was the existence of the terrible region known as Rattlesnake Ledge, and still tenanted by those damnable reptiles, which distil a fiercer

venom under our cold northern sky than the cobra himself in the land of tropical spices and poisons.

From the earliest settlement of the place, this fact had been, next to the Indians, the reigning nightmare of the inhabitants. It was easy enough, after a time, to drive away the savages ; for "a screeching Indian Divell," as our fathers called him, could not crawl into the crack of a rock to escape from his pursuers. But the venomous population of Rattlesnake Ledge had a Gibraltar for their fortress that might have defied the siege-train dragged to the walls of Sebastopol. In its deep embrasures and its impregnable casemates they reared their families, they met in love or wrath, they twined together in family knots, they hissed defiance in hostile clans, they fed, slept, hybernated, and in due time died in peace. Many a foray had the town's-people made, and many a stuffed skin was shown as a trophy, — nay, there were families where the children's first toy was made from the warning appendage that once vibrated to the wrath of one of these "cruel serpents." Sometimes one of them, coaxed out by a warm sun, would writhe himself down the hillside into the roads, up the walks that led to houses, — worse than this, into the long grass, where the bare-footed mowers would soon pass with their swinging scythes, — more rarely into houses, — and on one memorable occasion, early in the last century, into the meeting-

house, where he took a position on the pulpit-stairs, — as is narrated in the “Account of Some Remarkable Providences,” etc., where it is suggested that a strong tendency of the Rev. Didymus Bean, the Minister at that time, towards the Arminian Heresy may have had something to do with it, and that the Serpent supposed to have been killed on the Pulpit-Stairs was a false show of the Dæmon’s Contrivance, he having come in to listen to a Discourse which was a sweet Savour in his Nostrils, and, of course, not being capable of being killed Himself. Others said, however, that, though there was good Reason to think it was a Dæmon, yet he did come with Intent to bite the Heel of that faithful Servant, — etc.

One Gilson is said to have died of the bite of a rattlesnake in this town early in the present century. After this there was a great snake-hunt, in which very many of these venomous beasts were killed, — one in particular, said to have been as big round as a stout man’s arm, and to have had no less than *forty* joints to his rattle, — indicating, according to some, that he had lived forty years, but, if we might put any faith in the Indian tradition, that he had killed forty human beings, — an idle fancy, clearly. This hunt, however, had no permanent effect in keeping down the serpent population. Viviparous creatures are a kind of specie-paying lot, but oviparous ones only give their notes, as it were,

for a future brood,—an egg being, so to speak, a promise to pay a young one by-and-by, if nothing happen. Now the domestic habits of the rattlesnake are not studied very closely, for obvious reasons; but it is, no doubt, to all intents and purposes oviparous. Consequently it has large families, and is not easy to kill out.

In the year 184—, a melancholy proof was afforded to the inhabitants of Rockland, that the brood which infested The Mountain was not extirpated. A very interesting young married woman, detained at home at the time by the state of her health, was bitten in the entry of her own house by a rattlesnake which had found its way down from The Mountain. Owing to the almost instant employment of powerful remedies, the bite did not prove immediately fatal; but she died within a few months of the time when she was bitten.

All this seemed to throw a lurid kind of shadow over The Mountain. Yet, as many years passed without any accident, people grew comparatively careless, and it might rather be said to add a fearful kind of interest to the romantic hillside, that the banded reptiles, which had been the terror of the red men for nobody knows how many thousand years, were there still, with the same poison-bags and spring-teeth at the white men's service, if they meddled with them.

The other natural features of Rockland were such as many of our pleasant country-towns can boast of. A brook came tumbling down the mountain-side and skirted the most thickly settled portion of the village. In the parts of its course where it ran through the woods, the water looked almost as brown as coffee flowing from its urn, — to say like *smoky quartz* would perhaps give a better idea, — but in the open plain it sparkled over the pebbles white as a queen's diamonds. There were huckleberry-pastures on the lower flanks of The Mountain, with plenty of the sweet-scented bayberry mingled with the other bushes. In other fields grew great store of high-bush blackberries. Along the road-side were barberry-bushes, hung all over with bright red coral pendants in autumn and far into the winter. Then there were swamps set thick with dingy alders, where the three-leaved arum and the skunk's-cabbage grew broad and succulent, — shelving down into black boggy pools here and there, at the edge of which the green frog, stupidest of his tribe, sat waiting to be victimized by boy or snapping-turtle long after the shy and agile leopard-frog had taken the six-foot spring that plumped him into the middle of the pool. And on the neighboring banks the maiden-hair spread its flat disk of embroidered fronds on the wire-like stem that glistened polished and brown as the darkest tortoise-shell, and pale violets, cheated by the cold skies of their hues and per-

fume, sunned themselves like white-cheeked invalids. Over these rose the old forest-trees,— the maple, scarred with the wounds which had drained away its sweet life-blood,— the beech, its smooth gray bark mottled so as to look like the body of one of those great snakes of old that used to frighten armies,— always the mark of lovers' knives, as in the days of Musidora and her swain,— the yellow birch, rough as the breast of Silenus in old marbles,— the wild cherry, its little bitter fruit lying unheeded at its foot,— and, soaring over all, the huge, coarse-barked, splintery-limbed, dark-mantled hemlock, in the depth of whose aerial solitudes the crow brooded on her nest unscared, and the gray squirrel lived unharmed till his incisors grew to look like ram's-horns.

Rockland would have been but half a town without its pond; Quinnepeg Pond was the name of it, but the young ladies of the Apollinean Institute were very anxious that it should be called Crystalline Lake. It was here that the young folks used to sail in summer and skate in winter; here, too, those queer, old, rum-scented, good-for-nothing, lazy, story-telling, half-vagabonds, who sawed a little wood or dug a few potatoes now and then under the pretence of working for their living, used to go and fish through the ice for pickerel every winter. And here those three young people were drowned, a few summers ago, by the upsetting of a sail-boat

in a sudden flaw of wind. There is not one of these smiling ponds which has not devoured more youths and maidens than any of those monsters the ancients used to tell such lies about. But it was a pretty pond, and never looked more innocent—so the native “bard” of Rockland said in his elegy—than on the morning when they found Sarah Jane and Ellen Maria floating among the lily-pads.

The Apollinean Institute, or Institoot, as it was more commonly called, was, in the language of its Prospectus, a “first-class Educational Establishment.” It employed a considerable corps of instructors to rough out and finish the hundred young lady scholars it sheltered beneath its roof. First, Mr. and Mrs. Peckham, the Principal and the Matron of the school. Silas Peckham was a thorough Yankee, born on a windy part of the coast, and reared chiefly on salt-fish. Everybody knows the type of Yankee produced by this climate and diet: thin, as if he had been split and dried; with an ashen kind of complexion, like the tint of the food he is made of; and about as sharp, tough, juiceless, and biting to deal with as the other is to the taste. Silas Peckham kept a young ladies’ school exactly as he would have kept a hundred head of cattle,—for the simple, unadorned purpose of making just as much money in just as few years as could be safely done. Mr. Peckham gave very little personal attention to the department of instruction, but was

always busy with contracts for flour and potatoes, beef and pork, and other nutritive staples, the amount of which required for such an establishment was enough to frighten a quartermaster. Mrs. Peckham was from the West, raised on Indian corn and pork, which give a fuller outline and a more humid temperament, but may perhaps be thought to render people a little coarse-fibred. Her specialty was to look after the feathering, cackling, roosting, rising, and general behavior of these hundred chicks. An honest, ignorant woman, she could not have passed an examination in the youngest class. So this distinguished institution was under the charge of a commissary and a housekeeper, and its real business was making money by taking young girls in as boarders.

Connected with this, however, was the incidental fact, which the public took for the principal one, namely, the business of instruction. Mr. Peckham knew well enough that it was just as well to have good instructors as bad ones, so far as cost was concerned, and a great deal better for the reputation of his feeding-establishment. He tried to get the best he could without paying too much, and, having got them, to screw all the work out of them that could possibly be extracted.

There was a master for the English branches, with a young lady assistant. There was another young lady who taught French, of the *ahvahng*

and *pahndahng* style, which does not exactly smack of the asphalt of the Boulevards. There was also a German teacher of music, who sometimes helped in French of the *ahfaung* and *baun-taung* style, — so that, between the two, the young ladies could hardly have been mistaken for Parisians, by a Committee of the French Academy. The German teacher also taught a Latin class after his fashion, — *benna*, a ben, *gahboot*, a head, and so forth.

The master for the English branches had lately left the school for private reasons, which need not be here mentioned, — but he had gone, at any rate, and it was his place which had been offered to Mr. Bernard Langdon. The offer came just in season, — as, for various causes, he was willing to leave the place where he had begun his new experience.

It was on a fine morning, that Mr. Bernard, ushered in by Mr. Peckham, made his appearance in the great schoolroom of the Apollinean Institute. A general rustle ran all round the seats when the handsome young man was introduced. The principal carried him to the desk of the young lady English assistant, Miss Darley by name, and introduced him to her.

There was not a great deal of study done that day. The young lady assistant had to point out to the new master the whole routine in which the classes were engaged when their late teacher left, and which had gone on as well as it could since.

Then Master Langdon had a great many questions to ask, some relating to his new duties, and some, perhaps, implying a degree of curiosity not very unnatural under the circumstances. The truth is, the general effect of the schoolroom, with its scores of young girls, all their eyes naturally centring on him with fixed or furtive glances, was enough to bewilder and confuse a young man like Master Langdon, though he was not destitute of self-possession, as we have already seen.

You cannot get together a hundred girls, taking them as they come, from the comfortable and affluent classes, probably anywhere, certainly not in New England, without seeing a good deal of beauty. In fact, we very commonly mean by *beauty* the way young girls look when there is nothing to hinder their looking as Nature meant them to. And the great schoolroom of the Apollinean Institute did really make so pretty a show on the morning when Master Langdon entered it, that he might be pardoned for asking Miss Darley more questions about his scholars than about their lessons.

There were girls of all ages: little creatures, some pallid and delicate-looking, the offspring of invalid parents,—much given to books, not much to mischief, commonly spoken of as particularly good children, and contrasted with another sort, girls of more vigorous organization, who were disposed to laughing and play, and re-

quired a strong hand to manage them;—then young growing misses of every shade of Saxon complexion, and here and there one of more Southern hue: blondes, some of them so translucent-looking, that it seemed as if you could see the souls in their bodies, like bubbles in glass, if souls were objects of sight; brunettes, some with rose-red colors, and some with that swarthy hue which often carries with it a heavily-shaded lip, and which with pure outlines and outspoken reliefs, gives us some of our handsomest women,—the women whom ornaments of plain gold adorn more than any other *parures*; and again, but only here and there, one with dark hair and gray or blue eyes, a Celtic type, perhaps, but found in our native stock occasionally; rarest of all, a light-haired girl with dark eyes, hazel, brown, or of the color of that mountain-brook spoken of in this chapter, where it ran through shadowy woodlands. With these were to be seen at intervals some of maturer years, full-blown flowers among the opening buds, with that conscious look upon their faces which so many women wear during the period when they never meet a single man without having his monosyllable ready for him,—tied as they are, poor things! on the rock of expectation, each of them an Andromeda waiting for her Perseus.

“Who is that girl in ringlets,—the fourth in the third row on the right?” said Master Langdon.

"Charlotte Ann Wood," said Miss Darley; — "writes very pretty poems."

"Oh! — And the pink one, three seats from her? Looks bright; anything in her?"

"Emma Dean, — day-scholar, — Squire Dean's daughter, — nice girl, — second medal last year."

The master asked these two questions in a careless kind of way, and did not seem to pay any too much attention to the answers.

"And who and what is that," he said, — "sitting a little apart there, — that strange, wild-looking girl?"

This time he put the real question he wanted answered; — the other two were asked at random, as masks for the third.

The lady-teacher's face changed; — one would have said she was frightened or troubled. She looked at the girl doubtfully, as if she might hear the master's question and its answer. But the girl did not look up; — she was winding a gold chain about her wrist, and then uncoiling it, as if in a kind of reverie.

Miss Darley drew close to the master and placed her hand so as to hide her lips. "Don't look at her as if we were talking about her," she whispered softly; — "that is Elsie Venner."

CHAPTER V.

AN OLD-FASHIONED DESCRIPTIVE CHAPTER.

It was a comfort to get to a place with something like society, with residences which had pretensions to elegance, with people of some breeding, with a newspaper, and "stores" to advertise in it, and with two or three churches to keep each other alive by wholesome agitation. Rockland was such a place.

Some of the natural features of the town have been described already. The Mountain, of course, was what gave it its character, and redeemed it from wearing the commonplace expression which belongs to ordinary country-villages. Beautiful, wild, invested with the mystery which belongs to untrodden spaces, and with enough of terror to give it dignity, it had yet closer relations with the town over which it brooded than the passing stranger knew of. Thus, it made a local climate by cutting off the northern winds and holding the sun's heat like a garden-wall. Peach-trees, which, on the northern side of the mountain, hardly ever came to fruit, ripened abundant crops in Rockland.

But there was still another relation between the mountain and the town at its foot, which strangers were not likely to hear alluded to, and which was oftener thought of than spoken of by its inhabitants. Those high-impending forests,—“hangers,” as White of Selborne would have called them,—sloping far upward and backward into the distance, had always an air of menace blended with their wild beauty. It seemed as if some heaven-scaling Titan had thrown his shaggy robe over the bare, precipitous flanks of the rocky summit, and it might at any moment slide like a garment flung carelessly on the nearest chance-support, and, so sliding, crush the village out of being, as the Rossberg when it tumbled over on the valley of Goldau.

Persons have been known to remove from the place, after a short residence in it, because they were haunted day and night by the thought of this awful green wall piled up into the air over their heads. They would lie awake of nights, thinking they heard the muffled snapping of roots, as if a thousand acres of the mountain-side were tugging to break away, like the snow from a house-roof, and a hundred thousand trees were clinging with all their fibres to hold back the soil just ready to peel away and crash down with all its rocks and forest-growths. And yet, by one of those strange contradictions we are constantly finding in human nature, there were natives of the town who would come back thirty

or forty years after leaving it, just to nestle under this same threatening mountain-side, as old men sun themselves against southward-facing walls. The old dreams and legends of danger added to the attraction. If the mountain should ever slide, they had a kind of feeling as if they ought to be there. It was a fascination like that which the rattlesnake is said to exert.

This comparison naturally suggests the recollection of that other source of danger which was an element in the every-day life of the Rockland people. The folks in some of the neighboring towns had a joke against them, that a Rocklander couldn't hear a bean-pod rattle without saying, "The Lord have mercy on us!" It is very true, that many a nervous old lady has had a terrible start, caused by some mischievous young rogue's giving a sudden shake to one of these noisy vegetable products in her immediate vicinity. Yet, strangely enough, many persons missed the excitement of the possibility of a fatal bite in other regions, where there were nothing but black and green and striped snakes, mean ophidians, having the spite of the nobler serpent without his venom,—poor crawling creatures, whom Nature would not trust with a poison-bag. Many natives of Rockland did unquestionably experience a certain gratification in this infinitesimal sense of danger. It was noted that the old people retained their hearing longer than in other places. Some said it was the softened climate,

but others believed it was owing to the habit of keeping their ears open whenever they were walking through the grass or in the woods. At any rate, a slight sense of danger is often an agreeable stimulus. People sip their *crème de noyau* with a peculiar tremulous pleasure, because there is a bare possibility that it may contain prussic acid enough to knock them over; in which case they will lie as dead as if a thunder-cloud had emptied itself into the earth through their brain and marrow.

But Rockland had other features which helped to give it a special character. First of all, there was one grand street which was its chief glory. Elm Street it was called, naturally enough, for its elms made a long, pointed-arched gallery of it through most of its extent. No natural Gothic arch compares, for a moment, with that formed by two American elms, where their lofty jets of foliage shoot across each other's ascending curves, to intermingle their showery flakes of green. When one looks through a long double row of these, as in that lovely avenue which the poets of Yale remember so well, —

"O, could the vista of my life but now as bright appear

As when I first through Temple Street looked down thine espalier!"

he beholds a temple not built with hands, fairer than any minster, with all its clustered stems and flowering capitals, that ever grew in stone.

Nobody knows New England who is not on terms of intimacy with one of its elms. The

elm comes nearer to having a soul than any other vegetable creature among us. It loves man as man loves it. It is modest and patient. It has a small flake of a seed which blows in everywhere and makes arrangements for coming up by-and-by. So, in spring, one finds a crop of baby-elms among his carrots and parsnips, very weak and small compared to those succulent vegetables. The baby-elms die, most of them, slain, unrecognized or unheeded, by hand or hoe, as meekly as Herod's innocents. One of them gets overlooked, perhaps, until it has established a kind of right to stay. Three generations of carrot and parsnip-consumers have passed away, yourself among them, and now let your great-grandson look for the baby-elm. Twenty-two feet of clean girth, three hundred and sixty feet in the line that bounds its leafy circle, it covers the boy with such a canopy as neither glossy-leaved oak nor insect-haunted linden ever lifted into the summer skies.

Elm Street was the pride of Rockland, but not only on account of its Gothic-arched vista. In this street were most of the great houses, or "mansion-houses," as it was usual to call them. Along this street, also, the more nicely kept and neatly painted dwellings were chiefly congregated. It was the correct thing for a Rockland dignitary to have a house in Elm Street.

A New England "mansion-house" is naturally square, with dormer windows projecting from the

roof, which has a balustrade with turned posts round it. It shows a good breadth of front-yard before its door, as its owner shows a respectable expanse of clean shirt-front. It has a lateral margin beyond its stables and offices, as its master wears his white wrist-bands showing beyond his coat-cuffs. It may not have what can properly be called grounds, but it must have elbow-room, at any rate. Without it, it is like a man who is always tight-buttoned for want of any linen to show. The mansion-house which has had to button itself up tight in fences, for want of green or gravel margin, will be advertising for boarders presently. The old English pattern of the New England mansion-house, only on a somewhat grander scale, is Sir Thomas Abney's place, where dear, good Dr. Watts said prayers for the family, and wrote those blessed hymns of his that sing us into consciousness in our cradles, and come back to us in sweet, single verses, between the moments of wandering and of stupor, when we lie dying, and sound over us when we can no longer hear them, bringing grateful tears to the hot, aching eyes beneath the thick, black veils, and carrying the holy calm with them which filled the good man's heart, as he prayed and sung under the shelter of the old English mansion-house.

Next to the mansion-houses, came the two-story, trim, white-painted, "genteel" houses, which, being more gossipy and less nicely bred, crowded

close up to the street, instead of standing back from it with arms akimbo, like the mansion-houses. Their little front-yards were very commonly full of lilac and syringa and other bushes, which were allowed to smother the lower story almost to the exclusion of light and air, so that, what with small windows and small window-panes, and the darkness made by these choking growths of shrubbery, the front parlors of some of these houses were the most tomb-like, melancholy places that could be found anywhere among the abodes of the living. Their garnishing was apt to assist this impression. Large-patterned carpets, which always look discontented in little rooms, hair-cloth furniture, black and shiny as beetles' wing-cases, and centre-tables, with a sullen oil-lamp of the kind called astral by our imaginative ancestors, in the centre,—these things were inevitable. In set piles round the lamp was ranged the current literature of the day, in the form of Temperance Documents, unbound numbers of one of the Unknown Public's Magazines with worn-out steel engravings and high-colored fashion-plates, the Poems of a distinguished British author whom it is unnecessary to mention, a volume of sermons, or a novel or two, or both, according to the tastes of the family, and the Good Book, which is always *Itself* in the cheapest and commonest company. The father of the family with his hand in the breast of his coat, the mother of the same in a wide-bordered

cap, sometimes a print of the Last Supper, by no means Morghen's, or the Father of his Country, or the old General, or the Defender of the Constitution, or an unknown clergyman with an open book before him, — these were the usual ornaments of the walls, the first two a matter of rigor, the others according to politics and other tendencies.

This intermediate class of houses, wherever one finds them in New England towns, are very apt to be cheerless and unsatisfactory. They have neither the luxury of the mansion-house nor the comfort of the farm-house. They are rarely kept at an agreeable temperature. The mansion-house has large fireplaces and generous chimneys, and is open to the sunshine. The farm-house makes no pretensions, but it has a good warm kitchen, at any rate, and one can be comfortable there with the rest of the family, without fear and without reproach. These lesser country-houses of genteel aspirations are much given to patent subterfuges of one kind and another to get heat without combustion. The chilly parlor and the slippery hair-cloth seat take the life out of the warmest welcome. If one would make these places wholesome, happy, and cheerful, the first precept would be, — The dearest fuel, plenty of it, and let half the heat go up the chimney. If you can't afford this, don't try to live in a "genteel" fashion, but stick to the ways of the honest farm-house.

There were a good many comfortable farm-

houses scattered about Rockland. The best of them were something of the following pattern, which is too often superseded of late by a more pretentious, but infinitely less pleasing kind of rustic architecture. A little back from the road, seated directly on the green sod, rose a plain wooden building, two stories in front, with a long roof sloping backwards to within a few feet of the ground. This, like the "mansion-house," is copied from an old English pattern. Cottages of this model may be seen in Lancashire, for instance, always with the same honest, homely look, as if their roofs acknowledged their relationship to the soil out of which they sprung. The walls were unpainted, but turned by the slow action of sun and air and rain to a quiet dove- or slate-color. An old broken mill-stone at the door, — a well-sweep pointing like a finger to the heavens, which the shining round of water beneath looked up at like a dark unsleeping eye, — a single large elm a little at one side, — a barn twice as big as the house, — a cattle-yard, with

"The white horns tossing above the wall," —

some fields, in pasture or in crops, with low stone walls round them, — a row of beehives, — a garden-patch, with roots, and currant-bushes, and many-hued hollyhocks, and swollen-stemmed, globe-headed, seedling onions, and marigolds, and flower-de-luces, and lady's-delights, and peonies, crowding in together, with southernwood

in the borders, and woodbine and hops and morning-glories climbing as they got a chance, — these were the features by which the Rock-land-born children remembered the farm-house, when they had grown to be men. Such are the recollections that come over poor sailor-boys crawling out on reeling yards to reef topsails as their vessels stagger round the stormy Cape ; and such are the flitting images that make the eyes of old country-born merchants look dim and dreamy, as they sit in their city palaces, warm with the after-dinner flush of the red wave out of which Memory arises, as Aphrodite arose from the green waves of the ocean.

Two meeting-houses stood on two eminences, facing each other, and looking like a couple of fighting-cocks with their necks straight up in the air, — as if they would flap their roofs, the next thing, and crow out of their upstretched steeples, and peck at each other's glass eyes with their sharp-pointed weathercocks.

The first was a good pattern of the real old-fashioned New England meeting-house. It was a large barn with windows, fronted by a square tower crowned with a kind of wooden bell inverted and raised on legs, out of which rose a slender spire with the sharp-billed weathercock at its summit. Inside, tall, square pews with flapping seats, and a gallery running round three sides of the building. On the fourth side the pulpit, with a huge, dusty sounding-board hang-

ing over it. Here preached the Reverend Pierrepont Honeywood, D. D., successor, after a number of generations, to the office and the parsonage of the Reverend Didymus Bean, before mentioned, but not suspected of any of his alleged heresies. He held to the old faith of the Puritans, and occasionally delivered a discourse which was considered by the hard-headed theologians of his parish to have settled the whole matter fully and finally, so that now there was a good logical basis laid down for the Millennium, which might begin at once upon the platform of his demonstrations. Yet the Reverend Dr. Honeywood was fonder of preaching plain, practical sermons about the duties of life, and showing his Christianity in abundant good works among his people. It was noticed by some few of his flock, not without comment, that the great majority of his texts came from the Gospels, and this more and more as he became interested in various benevolent enterprises which brought him into relations with ministers and kind-hearted laymen of other denominations. He was in fact a man of a very warm, open, and exceedingly *human* disposition, and, although bred by a clerical father, whose motto was "*Sit anima mea cum Puritanis*," he exercised his human faculties in the harness of his ancient faith with such freedom that the straps of it got so loose they did not interfere greatly with the circulation of the warm blood through his system. Once in a

while he seemed to think it necessary to come out with a grand doctrinal sermon, and then he would lapse away for a while into preaching on men's duties to each other and to society, and hit hard, perhaps, at some of the actual vices of the time and place, and insist with such tenderness and eloquence on the great depth and breadth of true Christian love and charity, that his oldest deacon shook his head, and wished he had shown as much interest when he was preaching, three Sabbaths back, on Predestination, or in his discourse against the Sabellians. But he was sound in the faith ; no doubt of that. Did he not preside at the council held in the town of Tamarack, on the other side of the mountain, which expelled its clergyman for maintaining heretical doctrines ? As presiding officer, he did not vote, of course, but there was no doubt that he was all right ; he had some of the Edwards blood in him, and that couldn't very well let him go wrong.

The meeting-house on the other and opposite summit was of a more modern style, considered by many a great improvement on the old New England model, so that it is not uncommon for a country parish to pull down its old meeting-house, which has been preached in for a hundred years or so, and put up one of these more elegant edifices. The new building was in what may be called the florid shingle-Gothic manner. Its pinnacles and crockets and other ornaments were, like the body of the building, all of pine wood,

— an admirable material, as it is very soft and easily worked, and can be painted of any color desired. Inside, the walls were stuccoed in imitation of stone, — first a dark-brown square, then two light-brown squares, then another dark-brown square, and so on, to represent the accidental differences of shade always noticeable in the real stones of which walls are built. To be sure, the architect could not help getting his party-colored squares in almost as regular rhythmical order as those of a chess-board ; but nobody can avoid doing things in a systematic and serial way ; indeed, people who wish to plant trees in natural clumps know very well that they cannot keep from making regular lines and symmetrical figures, unless by some trick or other, as that one of throwing a peck of potatoes up into the air and sticking in a tree wherever a potato happens to fall. The pews of this meeting-house were the usual oblong ones, where people sit close together with a ledge before them to support their hymn-books, liable only to occasional contact with the back of the next pew's heads or bonnets, and a place running under the seat of that pew where hats could be deposited, — always at the risk of the owner, in case of injury by boots or crickets.

In this meeting-house preached the Reverend Chauncy Fairweather, a divine of the " Liberal " school, as it is commonly called, bred at that famous college which used to be thought, twenty

or thirty years ago, to have the monopoly of training young men in the milder forms of heresy. His ministrations were attended with decency, but not followed with enthusiasm. "The beauty of virtue" got to be an old story at last. "The moral dignity of human nature" ceased to excite a thrill of satisfaction, after some hundred repetitions. It grew to be a dull business, this preaching against stealing and intemperance, while he knew very well that the thieves were prowling round orchards and empty houses, instead of being there to hear the sermon, and that the drunkards, being rarely church-goers, get little good by the statistics and eloquent appeals of the preacher. Every now and then, however, the Reverend Mr. Fairweather let off a polemic discourse against his neighbor opposite, which waked his people up a little; but it was a languid congregation, at best,—very apt to stay away from meeting in the afternoon, and not at all given to extra evening services. The minister, unlike his rival of the other side of the way, was a down-hearted and timid kind of man. He went on preaching as he had been taught to preach, but he had misgivings at times. There was a little Roman Catholic church at the foot of the hill where his own was placed, which he always had to pass on Sundays. He could never look on the thronging multitudes that crowded its pews and aisles or knelt bare-headed on its steps, without a longing to get in among them and go down on his knees

and enjoy that luxury of devotional contact which makes a worshipping throng as different from the same numbers praying apart as a bed of coals is from a trail of scattered cinders.

“ Oh, if I could but huddle in with those poor laborers and working-women ! ” he would say to himself. “ If I could but breathe that atmosphere, stifling though it be, yet made holy by ancient litanies, and cloudy with the smoke of hallowed incense, for one hour, instead of droning over these moral precepts to my half-sleeping congregation ! ” The intellectual isolation of his sect preyed upon him ; for, of all terrible things to natures like his, the most terrible is to belong to a minority. No person that looked at his thin and sallow cheek, his sunken and sad eye, his tremulous lip, his contracted forehead, or who heard his querulous, though not unmusical voice, could fail to see that his life was an uneasy one, that he was engaged in some inward conflict. His dark, melancholic aspect contrasted with his seemingly cheerful creed, and was all the more striking, as the worthy Dr. Honeywood, professing a belief which made him a passenger on board a shipwrecked planet, was yet a most good-humored and companionable gentleman, whose laugh on week-days did one as much good to listen to as the best sermon he ever delivered on a Sunday.

A mile or two from the centre of Rockland was a pretty little Episcopal church, with a roof like a

wedge of cheese, a square tower, a stained window, and a trained rector, who read the service with such ventral depth of utterance and rrreduplication of the rrresonant letter, that his own mother would not have known him for her son, if the good woman had not ironed his surplice and put it on with her own hands.

There were two public-houses in the place : one dignified with the name of the Mountain House, somewhat frequented by city-people in the summer months, large-fronted, three-storied, balconied, boasting a distinet ladies'-drawing-room, and spreading a *table d'hôte* of some pretensions ; the other, "Pollard's Tahvern," in the common speech, — a two-story building, with a bar-room, once famous, where there was a great smell of hay and boots and pipes and all other bucolic-flavored elements, — where games of checkers were played on the back of the bel-lows with red and white kernels of corn, or with beans and coffee, — where a man slept in a box-settle at night, to wake up early passengers, — where teamsters came in, with wooden-handled whips and coarse frocks, reinforcing the bucolic flavor of the atmosphere, and middle-aged male gossips, sometimes including the squire of the neighboring law-office, gathered to exchange a question or two about the news, and then fall into that solemn state of suspended animation which the temperance bar-rooms of modern days produce in human beings, as the Grotta del Cane

does in dogs in the well-known experiments related by travellers. This bar-room used to be famous for drinking and story-telling, and sometimes fighting, in old times. That was when there were rows of decanters on the shelf behind the bar, and a hissing vessel of hot water ready, to make punch, and three or four *loggerheads* (long irons clubbed at the end) were always lying in the fire in the cold season, waiting to be plunged into sputtering and foaming mugs of flip,—a goodly compound, speaking according to the flesh, made with beer and sugar, and a certain suspicion of strong waters, over which a little nutmeg being grated, and in it the hot iron being then allowed to sizzle, there results a peculiar singed aroma, which the wise regard as a warning to remove themselves at once out of the reach of temptation.

But the bar of Pollard's Tahvern no longer presented its old attractions, and the *loggerheads* had long disappeared from the fire. In place of the decanters, were boxes containing "lozengers," as they were commonly called, sticks of candy in jars, cigars in tumblers, a few lemons, grown hard-skinned and marvellously shrunk by long exposure, but still feebly suggestive of possible lemonade,—the whole ornamented by festoons of yellow and blue cut fly-paper. On the front shelf of the bar stood a large German-silver pitcher of water, and scattered about were ill-conditioned lamps, with wicks that always wanted

picking, which burned red and smoked a good deal, and were apt to go out without any obvious cause, leaving strong reminiscences of the whale-fishery in the circumambient air.

The common school-houses of Rockland were dwarfed by the grandeur of the Apollinean Institute. The master passed one of them, in a walk he was taking, soon after his arrival at Rockland. He looked in at the rows of desks, and recalled his late experiences. He could not help laughing, as he thought how neatly he had knocked the young butcher off his pins.

“ ‘A little *science* is a dangerous thing,’

as well as a little ‘learning,’ ” he said to himself; “only it’s dangerous to the fellow you try it on.” And he cut him a good stick, and began climbing the side of The Mountain to get a look at that famous Rattlesnake Ledge.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SUNBEAM AND THE SHADOW.

THE virtue of the world is not mainly in its leaders. In the midst of the multitude which follows there is often something better than in the one that goes before. Old generals wanted to take Toulon, but one of their young colonels showed them how. The junior counsel has been known not unfrequently to make a better argument than his senior fellow,—if, indeed, he did not make both their arguments. Good ministers will tell you they have parishioners who beat them in the practice of the virtues. A great establishment, got up on commercial principles, like the Apollinean Institute, might yet be well carried on, if it happened to get good teachers. And when Master Langdon came to see its management, he recognized that there must be fidelity and intelligence somewhere among the instructors. It was only necessary to look for a moment at the fair, open forehead, the still, tranquil eye of gentle, habitual authority, the sweet gravity that lay upon the lips, to hear the clear answers to the pupils' questions, to notice how every request had

the force without the form of a command, and the young man could not doubt that the good genius of the school stood before him in the person of Helen Darley.

It was the old story. A poor country-clergyman dies, and leaves a widow and a daughter. In Old England the daughter would have eaten the bitter bread of a governess in some rich family. In New England she must keep a school. So, rising from one sphere to another, she at length finds herself the *prima donna* in the department of instruction in Mr. Silas Peckham's educational establishment.

What a miserable thing it is to be poor! She was dependent, frail, sensitive, conscientious. She was in the power of a hard, grasping, thin-blooded, tough-fibred, trading educator, who neither knew nor cared for a tender woman's sensibilities, but who paid her and meant to have his money's worth out of her brains, and as much more than his money's worth as he could get. She was consequently, in plain English, overworked, and an overworked woman is always a sad sight, — sadder a great deal than an overworked man, because she is so much more fertile in capacities of suffering than a man. She has so many varieties of headache, — sometimes as if Jael were driving the nail that killed Sisera into her temples, — sometimes letting her work with half her brain while the other half throbs as if it would go to pieces, — sometimes tightening

round the brows as if her cap-band were a ring of iron, — and then her neuralgias, and her back-aches, and her fits of depression, in which she thinks she is nothing and less than nothing, and those paroxysms which men speak slightly of as hysterical, — convulsions, that is all, only not commonly fatal ones, — so many trials which belong to her fine and mobile structure, — that she is always entitled to pity, when she is placed in conditions which develop her nervous tendencies.

The poor young lady's work had, of course, been doubled since the departure of Master Langdon's predecessor. Nobody knows what the weariness of instruction is, as soon as the teacher's faculties begin to be overtasked, but those who have tried it. The *relays* of fresh pupils, each new set with its exhausting powers in full action, coming one after another, take out all the reserved forces and faculties of resistance from the subject of their draining process.

The day's work was over, and it was late in the evening, when she sat down, tired and faint, with a great bundle of girls' themes or compositions to read over before she could rest her weary head on the pillow of her narrow trundle-bed, and forget for a while the treadmill stair of labor she was daily climbing.

How she dreaded this most forlorn of all a teacher's tasks! She was conscientious in her duties, and would insist on reading every sen-

tence, — there was no saying where she might find faults of grammar or bad spelling. There might have been twenty or thirty of these themes in the bundle before her. Of course she knew pretty well the leading sentiments they could contain: that beauty was subject to the accidents of time; that wealth was inconstant, and existence uncertain; that virtue was its own reward; that youth exhaled, like the dewdrop from the flower, ere the sun had reached its meridian; that life was o'ershadowed with trials; that the lessons of virtue instilled by our beloved teachers were to be our guides through all our future career. The imagery employed consisted principally of roses, lilies, birds, clouds, and brooks, with the celebrated comparison of wayward genius to a meteor. Who does not know the small, slanted, Italian hand of these girls'-compositions, — their stringing together of the good old traditional copy-book phrases, their occasional gushes of sentiment, their profound estimates of the world, sounding to the old folks that read them as the experience of a bantam-pullet's last-hatched young one with the chips of its shell on its head would sound to a Mother Cary's chicken, who knew the great ocean with all its typhoons and tornadoes? Yet every now and then one is liable to be surprised with strange clairvoyant flashes, that can hardly be explained, except by the mysterious inspiration which every now and then seizes a young girl and exalts her intelligence,

just as hysteria in other instances exalts the sensibility, — a little something of that which made Joan of Arc, and the Burney girl who prophesied “Evelina,” and the Davidson sisters. In the midst of these commonplace exercises which Miss Darley read over so carefully were two or three that had something of individual flavor about them, and here and there there was an image or an epithet which showed the footprint of a passionate nature, as a fallen scarlet feather marks the path the wild flamingo has trodden.

The young lady teacher read them with a certain indifference of manner, as one reads proofs, — noting defects of detail, but not commonly arrested by the matters treated of. Even Miss Charlotte Ann Wood’s poem, beginning

“How sweet at evening’s balmy hour,”

did not excite her. She marked the inevitable false rhyme of Cockney and Yankee beginners, *morn* and *dawn*, and tossed the verses on the pile of papers she had finished. She was looking over some of the last of them in a rather listless way, — for the poor thing was getting sleepy in spite of herself, — when she came to one which seemed to rouse her attention, and lifted her drooping lids. She looked at it a moment before she would touch it. Then she took hold of it by one corner and slid it off from the rest. One would have said she was afraid of it, or had some undefined antipathy which made it hateful to her.

Such odd fancies are common enough in young persons in her nervous state. Many of these young people will jump up twenty times a day and run to dabble the tips of their fingers in water, after touching the most inoffensive objects.

This composition was written in a singular, sharp-pointed, long, slender hand, on a kind of wavy, ribbed paper. There was something strangely suggestive about the look of it,—but exactly of what, Miss Darley either could not or did not try to think. The subject of the paper was *The Mountain*,—the composition being a sort of descriptive rhapsody. It showed a startling familiarity with some of the savage scenery of the region. One would have said that the writer must have threaded its wildest solitudes by the light of the moon and stars as well as by day. As the teacher read on, her color changed, and a kind of tremulous agitation came over her. There were hints in this strange paper she did not know what to make of. There was something in its descriptions and imagery that recalled,—Miss Darley could not say what,—but it made her frightfully nervous. Still she could not help reading, till she came to one passage which so agitated her, that the tired and overwearied girl's self-control left her entirely. She sobbed once or twice, then laughed convulsively, and flung herself on the bed, where she worked out a set hysteric spasm as she best might, without anybody to rub her hands and see that she did not hurt

herself. By-and-by she got quiet, rose and went to her book-case, took down a volume of Coleridge, and read a short time, and so to bed, to sleep and wake from time to time with a sudden start out of uneasy dreams.

Perhaps it is of no great consequence what it was in the composition which set her off into this nervous paroxysm. She was in such a state that almost any slight agitation would have brought on the attack, and it was the accident of her transient excitability, very probably, which made a trifling cause the seeming occasion of so much disturbance. The theme was signed, in the same peculiar, sharp, slender hand, *E. Venner*, and was, of course, written by that wild-looking girl who had excited the master's curiosity and prompted his question, as before mentioned.

The next morning the lady-teacher looked pale and wearied, naturally enough, but she was in her place at the usual hour, and Master Langdon in his own. The girls had not yet entered the school-room.

"You have been ill, I am afraid," said Mr. Bernard.

"I was not well yesterday," she answered. "I had a worry and a kind of fright. It is so dreadful to have the charge of all these young souls and bodies! Every young girl ought to walk, locked close, arm in arm, between two guardian angels. Sometimes I faint almost with

the thought of all that I ought to do, and of my own weakness and wants.— Tell me, are there not natures born so out of parallel with the lines of natural law that nothing short of a miracle can bring them right ? ”

Mr. Bernard had speculated somewhat, as all thoughtful persons of his profession are forced to do, on the innate organic tendencies with which individuals, families, and races are born. He replied, therefore, with a smile, as one to whom the question suggested a very familiar class of facts.

“ Why, of course. Each of us is only the footing-up of a double column of figures that goes back to the first pair. Every unit tells,— and some of them are *plus*, and some *minus*. If the columns don’t add up right, it is commonly because we can’t make out all the figures. I don’t mean to say that something may not be added by Nature to make up for losses and keep the race to its average, but we are mainly nothing but the answer to a long sum in addition and subtraction. No doubt there are people born with impulses at every possible angle to the parallels of Nature, as you call them. If they happen to cut these at right angles, of course they are beyond the reach of common influences. Slight obliquities are what we have most to do with in education. Penitentiaries and insane asylums take care of most of the right-angle cases.— I am afraid I have put it too much like

a professor, and I am only a student, you know. Pray, what set you to asking me this? Any strange cases among the scholars?"

The meek teacher's blue eyes met the luminous glance that came with the question. She, too, was of gentle blood, — not meaning by that that she was of any noted lineage, but that she came of a cultivated stock, never rich, but long trained to intellectual callings. A thousand decencies, amenities, reticences, graces, which no one thinks of until he misses them, are the traditional right of those who spring from such families. And when two persons of this exceptional breeding meet in the midst of the common multitude, they seek each other's company at once by the natural law of elective affinity. It is wonderful how men and women know their peers. If two stranger queens, sole survivors of two shipwrecked vessels, were cast, half-naked, on a rock together, each would at once address the other as "Our Royal Sister."

Helen Darley looked into the dark eyes of Bernard Langdon glittering with the light which flashed from them with his question. Not as those foolish, innocent country-girls of the small village did she look into them, to be fascinated and bewildered, but to sound them with a calm, steadfast purpose. "A gentleman," she said to herself, as she read his expression and his features with a woman's rapid, but exhausting glance. "A lady," he said to himself, as he

met her questioning look, — so brief, so quiet, yet so assured, as of one whom necessity had taught to read faces quickly without offence, as children read the faces of parents, as wives read the faces of hard-souled husbands. All this was but a few seconds' work, and yet the main point was settled. If there had been any vulgar curiosity or coarseness of any kind lurking in his expression, she would have detected it. If she had not lifted her eyes to his face so softly and kept them there so calmly and withdrawn them so quietly, he would not have said to himself, "She is a *lady*," for that word meant a good deal to the descendant of the courtly Wentworths and the scholarly Langdons.

"There are strange people everywhere, Mr. Langdon," she said, "and I don't think our school-room is an exception. I am glad you believe in the force of transmitted tendencies. It would break my heart, if I did not think that there are faults beyond the reach of everything but God's special grace. I should die, if I thought that my negligence or incapacity was alone responsible for the errors and sins of those I have charge of. Yet there are mysteries I do not know how to account for." She looked all round the school-room, and then said, in a whisper, "Mr. Langdon, we had a girl that *stole*, in the school, not long ago. Worse than that, we had a girl who tried to set us on fire. Children of good people, both of them. And we have a girl now that frightens me so" —

The door opened, and three misses came in to take their seats: three types, as it happened, of certain classes, into which it would not have been difficult to distribute the greater number of the girls in the school. — *Hannah Martin*. Fourteen years and three months old. Short-necked, thick-waisted, round-cheeked, smooth, vacant forehead, large, dull eyes. Looks good-natured, with little other expression. Three buns in her bag, and a large apple. Has a habit of attacking her provisions in school-hours. — *Rosa Milburn*. Sixteen. Brunette, with a rareripe flush in her cheeks. Color comes and goes easily. Eyes wandering, apt to be downcast. Moody at times. Said to be passionate, if irritated. Finished in high relief. Carries shoulders well back and walks well, as if proud of her woman's life, with a slight rocking movement, being one of the wide-flanged pattern, but seems restless, — a hard girl to look after. Has a romance in her pocket, which she means to read in school-time. — *Charlotte Ann Wood*. Fifteen. The poetess before mentioned. Long, light ringlets, pallid complexion, blue eyes. Delicate child, half unfolded. Gentle, but languid and despondent. Does not go much with the other girls, but reads a good deal, especially poetry, underscoring favorite passages. Writes a great many verses, very fast, not very correctly; full of the usual human sentiments, expressed in the accustomed phrases. Undervitalized. Sensibilities not covered with

their normal integuments. A negative condition, often confounded with genius, and sometimes running into it. Young people who *fall* out of line through weakness of the active faculties are often confounded with those who *step* out of it through strength of the intellectual ones.

The girls kept coming in, one after another, or in pairs or groups, until the school-room was nearly full. Then there was a little pause, and a light step was heard in the passage. The lady-teacher's eyes turned to the door, and the master's followed them in the same direction.

A girl of about seventeen entered. She was tall and slender, but rounded, with a peculiar undulation of movement, such as one sometimes sees in perfectly untutored country-girls, whom Nature, the queen of graces, has taken in hand, but more commonly in connection with the very highest breeding of the most thoroughly trained society. She was a splendid scowling beauty, black-browed, with a flash of white teeth which was always like a surprise when her lips parted. She wore a checkered dress, of a curious pattern, and a camel's-hair scarf twisted a little fantastically about her. She went to her seat, which she had moved a short distance apart from the rest, and, sitting down, began playing listlessly with her gold chain, as was a common habit with her, coiling it and uncoiling it about her slender wrist, and braiding it in with her long, delicate fingers. Presently she looked up. Black, piercing eyes, not

large,—a low forehead, as low as that of Clytie in the Townley bust,—black hair, twisted in heavy braids,—a face that one could not help looking at for its beauty, yet that one wanted to look away from for something in its expression, and could not for those diamond eyes. They were fixed on the lady-teacher now. The latter turned her own away, and let them wander over the other scholars. But they could not help coming back again for a single glance at the wild beauty. The diamond eyes were on her still. She turned the leaves of several of her books, as if in search of some passage, and, when she thought she had waited long enough to be safe, once more stole a quick look at the dark girl. The diamond eyes were still upon her. She put her kerchief to her forehead, which had grown slightly moist; she sighed once, almost shivered, for she felt cold; then, following some ill-defined impulse, which she could not resist, she left her place and went to the young girl's desk.

"*What do you want of me, Elsie Venner?*" It was a strange question to put, for the girl had not signified that she wished the teacher to come to her.

"Nothing," she said. "I thought I could make you come." The girl spoke in a low tone, a kind of half-whisper. She did not lisp, yet her articulation of one or two consonants was not absolutely perfect.

"Where did you get that flower, Elsie?" said

Miss Darley. It was a rare alpine flower, which was found only in one spot among the rocks of The Mountain.

"Where it grew," said Elsie Venner. "Take it." The teacher could not refuse her. The girl's finger-tips touched hers as she took it. How cold they were for a girl of such an organization!

The teacher went back to her seat. She made an excuse for quitting the school-room soon afterwards. The first thing she did was to fling the flower into her fireplace and rake the ashes over it. The second was to wash the tips of her fingers, as if she had been another Lady Macbeth. A poor, overtasked, nervous creature,—we must not think too much of her fancies.

After school was done, she finished the talk with the master which had been so suddenly interrupted. There were things spoken of which may prove interesting by-and-by, but there are other matters we must first attend to.

CHAPTER VII.

THE EVENT OF THE SEASON.

"MR. and Mrs. Colonel Sprowle's compliments to Mr. Langdon and requests the pleasure of his company at a social entertainment on Wednesday evening next.

"Elm St. Monday."

On paper of a pinkish color and musky smell, with a large **S** at the top, and an embossed border. Envelop adherent, not sealed. Addressed,

— *Langdon Esq.*

Present.

Brought by H. Frederic Sprowle, youngest son of the Colonel, — the H. of course standing for the paternal Hezekiah, put in to please the father, and reduced to its initial to please the mother, she having a marked preference for Frederic. Boy directed to wait for an answer.

"Mr. Langdon has the pleasure of accepting Mr. and Mrs. Colonel Sprowle's polite invitation for Wednesday evening."

• On plain paper, sealed with an initial.

In walking along the main street, Mr. Bernard had noticed a large house of some pretensions to architectural display, namely, unnecessarily projecting eaves, giving it a mushroomy aspect, wooden mouldings at various available points, and a grandiose arched portico. It looked a little swaggering by the side of one or two of the mansion-houses that were not far from it, was painted too bright for Mr. Bernard's taste, had rather too fanciful a fence before it, and had some fruit-trees planted in the front-yard, which to this fastidious young gentleman implied a defective sense of the fitness of things, not promising in people who lived in so large a house, with a mushroom roof and a triumphal arch for its entrance.

This place was known as "Colonel Sprowle's villa," (genteel friends,) — as "the elegant residence of our distinguished fellow-citizen, Colonel Sprowle," (Rockland Weekly Universe,) — as "the neew haouse," (old settlers,) — as "Sprawle's Folly," (disaffected and possibly envious neighbors,) — and in common discourse, as "the Colonel's."

Hezekiah Sprowle, Esquire, Colonel Sprowle of the Commonwealth's Militia, was a retired "merchant." An India merchant he might, perhaps, have been properly called; for he used to deal in West India goods, such as coffee, sugar, and molasses, not to speak of rum, — also in tea, salt fish, butter and cheese, oil and candles, dried fruit, agricultural "p'dóose" generally, industrial

products, such as boots and shoes, and various kinds of iron and wooden ware, and at one end of the establishment in calicoes and other stuffs, — to say nothing of miscellaneous objects of the most varied nature, from sticks of candy, which tempted in the smaller youth with coppers in their fists, up to ornamental articles of apparel, pocket-books, breast-pins, gilt-edged Bibles, stationery, — in short, everything which was like to prove seductive to the rural population. The Colonel had made money in trade, and also by matrimony. He had married Sarah, daughter and heiress of the late Tekel Jordan, Esq., an old miser, who gave the town-clock, which carries his name to posterity in large gilt letters as a generous benefactor of his native place. In due time the Colonel reaped the reward of well-placed affections. When his wife's inheritance fell in, he thought he had money enough to give up trade, and therefore sold out his "store," called in some dialects of the English language *shop*, and his business.

Life became pretty hard work to him, of course, as soon as he had nothing particular to do. Country people with money enough not to have to work are in much more danger than city people in the same condition. They get a specific look and character, which are the same in all the villages where one studies them. They very commonly fall into a routine, the basis of which is going to some lounging-place or other, a bar-room,

a reading-room, or something of the kind. They grow slovenly in dress, and wear the same hat forever. They have a feeble curiosity for news perhaps, which they take daily as a man takes his bitters, and then fall silent and think they are thinking. But the mind goes out under this regimen, like a fire without a draught; and it is not very strange, if the instinct of mental self-preservation drives them to brandy-and-water, which makes the hoarse whisper of memory musical for a few brief moments, and puts a weak leer of promise on the features of the hollow-eyed future. The Colonel was kept pretty well in hand as yet by his wife, and though it had happened to him once or twice to come home rather late at night with a curious tendency to say the same thing twice and even three times over, it had always been in very cold weather,—and everybody knows that no one is safe to drink a couple of glasses of wine in a warm room and go suddenly out into the cold air.

Miss Matilda Sprowle, sole daughter of the house, had reached the age at which young ladies are supposed in technical language to have *come out*, and thereafter are considered to be *in company*.

"There's one piece o' goods," said the Colonel to his wife, "that we ha'n't disposed of, nor got a customer for yet. That's Matildy. I don't mean to set *her* up at vaandoo. I guess she can have her pick of a dozen."

"She 's never seen anybody yet," said Mrs. Sprowle, who had had a certain project for some time, but had kept quiet about it. "Let 's have a party, and give her a chance to show herself and see some of the young folks."

The Colonel was not very clear-headed, and he thought, naturally enough, that the party was his own suggestion, because his remark led to the first starting of the idea. He entered into the plan, therefore, with a feeling of pride as well as pleasure, and the great project was resolved upon in a family council without a dissentient voice. This was the party, then, to which Mr. Bernard was going. The town had been full of it for a week. "Everybody was asked." So everybody said that was invited. But how in respect of those who were not asked? If it had been one of the old mansion-houses that was giving a party, the boundary between the favored and the slighted families would have been known pretty well beforehand, and there would have been no great amount of grumbling. But the Colonel, for all his title, had a forest of poor relations and a brushwood swamp of shabby friends, for he had scrambled up to fortune, and now the time was come when he must define his new social position.

This is always an awkward business in town or country. An exclusive alliance between two powers is often the same thing as a declaration of war against a third. Rockland was soon

split into a triumphant minority, invited to Mrs. Sprowle's party, and a great majority, uninvited, of which the fraction just on the border line between recognized "gentility" and the level of the ungloved masses was in an active state of excitement and indignation.

"Who is she, I should like to know?" said Mrs. Saymore, the tailor's wife. "There was plenty of folks in Rockland as good as ever Sally Jordan was, if she *had* managed to pick up a merchant. Other folks could have married merchants, if their families wasn't as wealthy as them old skinflints that willed her their money," etc. etc. Mrs. Saymore expressed the feeling of many beside herself. She had, however, a special right to be proud of the name she bore. Her husband was own cousin to the Saymores of Freestone Avenue (who write the name *Seymour*, and claim to be of the Duke of Somerset's family, showing a clear descent from the Protector to Edward Seymour, (1630,) — then a jump that would break a herald's neck to one Seth Saymore, (1783,) — from whom to the head of the present family the line is clear again). Mrs. Saymore, the tailor's wife, was not invited, because her husband *mended* clothes. If he had confined himself strictly to *making* them, it would have put a different face upon the matter.

The landlord of the Mountain House and his lady were invited to Mrs. Sprowle's party. Not so the landlord of Pollard's Tahvern and his lady.

Whereupon the latter vowed that they would have a party at their house too, and made arrangements for a dance of twenty or thirty couples, to be followed by an entertainment. Tickets to this "Social Ball" were soon circulated, and, being accessible to all at a moderate price, admission to the "Elegant Supper" included, this second festival promised to be as merry, if not as select, as the great party.

Wednesday came. Such doings had never been heard of in Rockland as went on that day at the "villa." The carpet had been taken up in the long room, so that the young folks might have a dance. Miss Matilda's piano had been moved in, and two fiddlers and a clarinet-player engaged to make music. All kinds of lamps had been put in requisition, and even colored wax-candles figured on the mantel-pieces. The costumes of the family had been tried on the day before: the Colonel's black suit fitted exceedingly well; his lady's velvet dress displayed her contours to advantage; Miss Matilda's flowered silk was considered superb; the eldest son of the family, Mr. T. Jordan Sprowle, called affectionately and elegantly "Geordie," voted himself "stun-nin'"; and even the small youth who had borne Mr. Bernard's invitation was effective in a new jacket and trousers, buttony in front, and baggy in the reverse aspect, as is wont to be the case with the home-made garments of inland youngsters.

Great preparations had been made for the refection which was to be part of the entertainment. There was much clinking of borrowed spoons, which were to be carefully counted, and much clicking of borrowed china, which was to be tenderly handled, — for nobody in the country keeps those vast closets full of such things which one may see in rich city-houses. Not a great deal could be done in the way of flowers, for there were no green-houses, and few plants were out as yet; but there were paper ornaments for the candlesticks, and colored mats for the lamps, and all the tassels of the curtains and bells were taken out of those brown linen bags, in which, for reasons hitherto undiscovered, they are habitually concealed in some households. In the remoter apartments every imaginable operation was going on at once, — roasting, boiling, baking, beating, rolling, pounding in mortars, frying, freezing; for there was to be ice-cream to-night of domestic manufacture; — and in the midst of all these labors, Mrs. Sprowle and Miss Matilda were moving about, directing and helping as they best might, all day long. When the evening came, it might be feared they would not be in just the state of mind and body to entertain company.

— One would like to give a party now and then, if one could be a billionaire. — “Antoine, I am going to have twenty people to dine to-day.” “*Bien, Madame.*” Not a word or thought

more about it, but get home in season to dress, and come down to your own table, one of your own guests.—“Giuseppe, we are to have a party a week from to-night,—five hundred invitations,—there is the list.” The day comes. “Madam, do you remember you have your party to-night?” “Why, so I have! Everything right? supper and all?” “All as it should be, Madam.” “Send up Victorine.” “Victorine, full toilet for this evening,—pink, diamonds, and emeralds. Coiffeur at seven. *Allez.*” — Billionism, or even millionism, must be a blessed kind of state, with health and clear conscience and youth and good looks,—but most blessed in this, that it takes off all the mean cares which give people the three wrinkles between the eyebrows, and leaves them free to have a good time and make others have a good time, all the way along from the charity that tips up unexpected loads of wood before widows’ houses, and leaves foundling turkeys upon poor men’s door-steps, and sets lean clergymen crying at the sight of anonymous fifty-dollar bills, to the taste which orders a perfect banquet in such sweet accord with every sense that everybody’s nature flowers out full-blown in its golden-glowing, fragrant atmosphere.

— A great party given by the smaller gentry of the interior is a kind of solemnity, so to speak. It involves so much labor and anxiety,—its spasmodic splendors are so violently contrasted with the homeliness of every-day family-life,—it is

such a formidable matter to break in the raw subordinates to the *manège* of the cloak-room and the table, — there is such a terrible uncertainty in the results of unfamiliar culinary operations, — so many feuds are involved in drawing that fatal line which divides the invited from the uninvited fraction of the local universe, — that, if the notes requested the pleasure of the guests' company on "this solemn occasion," they would pretty nearly express the true state of things.

The Colonel himself had been pressed into the service. He had pounded something in the great mortar. He had agitated a quantity of sweetened and thickened milk in what was called a cream-freezer. At eleven o'clock, A. M., he retired for a space. On returning, his color was noted to be somewhat heightened, and he showed a disposition to be jocular with the female help, — which tendency, displaying itself in livelier demonstrations than were approved at head-quarters, led to his being detailed to out-of-door duties, such as raking gravel, arranging places for horses to be hitched to, and assisting in the construction of an arch of winter-green at the porch of the mansion.

A whiff from Mr. Geordie's cigar refreshed the toiling females from time to time; for the windows had to be opened occasionally, while all these operations were going on, and the youth amused himself with inspecting the interior, encouraging the operatives now and then in the phrases com-

monly employed by genteel young men,—for he had perused an odd volume of “*Verdant Green*,” and was acquainted with a Sophomore from one of the fresh-water colleges.—“Go it on the feed!” exclaimed this spirited young man. “Nothin’ like a good spread. Grub enough and good liquor; that’s the ticket. Guv’nor’ll do the heavy polite, and let me alone for polishin’ off the young charmers.” And Mr. Geordie looked expressively at a handmaid who was rolling gingerbread, as if he were rehearsing for “*Don Giovanni*.”

Evening came at last, and the ladies were forced to leave the scene of their labors to array themselves for the coming festivities. The tables had been set in a back room, the meats were ready, the pickles were displayed, the cake was baked, the blanc-mange had stiffened, and the ice-cream had frozen.

At half past seven o’clock, the Colonel, in costume, came into the front parlor, and proceeded to light the lamps. Some were good-humored enough and took the hint of a lighted match at once. Others were as vicious as they could be,—would not light on any terms, any more than if they were filled with water, or lighted and smoked one side of the chimney, or sputtered a few sparks and sulked themselves out, or kept up a faint show of burning, so that their ground glasses looked as feebly phosphorescent as so many invalid fireflies. With much coaxing and screwing and pricking, a tolerable illumination was at last

achieved. At eight there was a grand rustling of silks, and Mrs. and Miss Sprowle descended from their respective bowers or boudoirs. Of course they were pretty well tired by this time, and very glad to sit down,—having the prospect before them of being obliged to stand for hours. The Colonel walked about the parlor, inspecting his regiment of lamps. By-and-by Mr. Geordie entered.

“Mph! mph!” he sniffed, as he came in. “You smell of lamp-smoke here.”

That always galls people,—to have a new-comer accuse them of smoke or close air, which they have got used to and do not perceive. The Colonel raged at the thought of his lamps’ smoking, and tongued a few anathemas inside of his shut teeth, but turned down two or three that burned higher than the rest.

Master H. Frederic next made his appearance, with questionable marks upon his fingers and countenance. Had been tampering with something brown and sticky. His elder brother grew playful, and caught him by the baggy reverse of his more essential garment.

“Hush!” said Mrs. Sprowle,—“there’s the bell!”

Everybody took position at once, and began to look very smiling and altogether at ease.—False alarm. Only a parcel of spoons,—“loaned,” as the inland folks say when they mean lent, by a neighbor.

"Better late than never!" said the Colonel; "let me heft them spoons."

Mrs. Sprowle came down into her chair again as if all her bones had been bewitched out of her.

"I'm pretty nigh beat out a'ready," said she, "before any of the folks has come."

They sat silent awhile, waiting for the first arrival. How nervous they got! and how their senses were sharpened!

"Hark!" said Miss Matilda,—"what's that rumblin'!"

It was a cart going over a bridge more than a mile off, which at any other time they would not have heard. After this there was a lull, and poor Mrs. Sprowle's head nodded once or twice. Presently a crackling and grinding of gravel;—how much that means, when we are waiting for those whom we long or dread to see! Then a change in the tone of the gravel-crackling.

"Yes, they have turned in at our gate. They're comin'! Mother! mother!"

Everybody in position, smiling and at ease. Bell rings. Enter the first set of visitors. The Event of the Season has begun.

"Law! it's nothin' but the Cranes' folks! I do believe Mahala's come in that old green delaine she wore at the Surprise Party!"

Miss Matilda had peeped through a crack of the door and made this observation and the remark founded thereon. Continuing her attitude of attention, she overheard Mrs. Crane and her

two daughters conversing in the attiring-room, up one flight.

"How fine everything is in the great house!" said Mrs. Crane,—"jest look at the picters!"

"Matildy Sprowle's drawins," said Ada Azuba, the eldest daughter.

"I should think so," said Mahala Crane, her younger sister,—a wide-awake girl, who hadn't been to school for nothing, and performed a little on the lead pencil herself. "I should like to know whether that's a hay-cock or a mountain!"

Miss Matilda winced; for this must refer to her favorite monochrome, executed by laying on heavy shadows and stumping them down into mellow harmony,—the style of drawing which is taught in six lessons, and the kind of specimen which is executed in something less than one hour. Parents and other very near relatives are sometimes gratified with these productions, and cause them to be framed and hung up, as in the present instance.

"I guess we won't go down jest yet," said Mrs. Crane, "as folks don't seem to have come."

So she began a systematic inspection of the dressing-room and its conveniences.

"Mahogany four-poster,—come from the Jordans', I cal'late. Marseilles quilt. Ruffles all round the pillar. Chintz curtins,—jest put up,—o' purpose for the party, I'll lay ye a dollar.—What a nice washbowl!" (Taps it with a white knuckle belonging to a red finger.) "Stone cha-

ney. — Here's a bran'-new brush and comb,— and here's a scent-bottle. Come here, girls, and fix yourselves in the glass, and scent your pocket-handkerchers."

And Mrs. Crane bedewed her own kerchief with some of the *eau de Cologne* of native manufacture,— said on its label to be much superior to the German article.

It was a relief to Mrs. and the Miss Cranes when the bell rang and the next guests were admitted. Deacon and Mrs. Soper,— Deacon Soper of the Rev. Mr. Fairweather's church, and his lady. Mrs. Deacon Soper was directed, of course, to the ladies' dressing-room, and her husband to the other apartment, where gentlemen were to leave their outside coats and hats. Then came Mr. and Mrs. Briggs, and then the three Miss Spinneys, then Silas Peckham, Head of the Apollinean Institute, and Mrs. Peckham, and more after them, until at last the ladies' dressing-room got so full that one might have thought it was a trap none of them could get out of. In truth, they all felt a little awkwardly. Nobody wanted to be first to venture down-stairs. At last Mr. Silas Peckham thought it was time to make a move for the parlor, and for this purpose presented himself at the door of the ladies' dressing-room.

"Lorindy, my dear!" he exclaimed to Mrs. Peckham,— "I think there can be no impropriety in our joining the family down-stairs."

Mrs. Peckham laid her large, flaccid arm in the sharp angle made by the black sleeve which held the bony limb her husband offered, and the two took the stair and struck out for the parlor. The ice was broken, and the dressing-room began to empty itself into the spacious, lighted apartments below.

Mr. Silas Peckham scaled into the room with Mrs. Peckham alongside, like a shad conveying a jelly-fish.

"Good evenin', Mrs. Sprowle! I hope I see you well this evenin'. How's your haälth, Colonel Sprowle?"

"Very well, much obleeged to you. Hope you and your good lady are well. Much pleased to see you. Hope you'll enjoy yourselves. We've laid out to have everything in good shape, — spared no trouble nor ex" —

—— "pense," — said Silas Peckham.

Mrs. Colonel Sprowle, who, you remember, was a Jordan, had nipped the Colonel's statement in the middle of the word Mr. Peckham finished, with a look that jerked him like one of those sharp twitches women keep giving a horse when they get a chance to drive one.

Mr. and Mrs. Crane, Miss Ada Azuba, and Miss Mahala Crane made their entrance. There had been a discussion about the necessity and propriety of inviting this family, the head of which kept a small shop for hats and boots and shoes. The Colonel's casting vote had carried

it in the affirmative. — How terribly the poor old green de-laine did cut up in the blaze of so many lamps and candles.

—— Deluded little wretch, male or female, in town or country, going to your first great party, how little you know the nature of the ceremony in which you are to bear the part of victim! What! are not these garlands and gauzy mists and many-colored streamers which adorn you, is not this music which welcomes you, this radiance that glows about you, meant solely for your enjoyment, young miss of seventeen or eighteen summers, now for the first time swimming into the frothy, chatoyant, sparkling, undulating sea of laces and silks and satins, and white-armed, flower-crowned maidens struggling in their waves, beneath the lustres that make the false summer of the drawing-room?

Stop at the threshold! This is a hall of judgment you are entering; the court is in session; and if you move five steps forward, you will be at its bar.

There was a tribunal once in France, as you may remember, called the *Chambre Ardente*, the Burning Chamber. It was hung all round with lamps, and hence its name. The burning chamber for the trial of young maidens is the blazing ball-room. What have they full-dressed you, or rather half-dressed you for, do you think? To make you look pretty, of course! — Why have they hung a chandelier above you, flickering all

over with flames, so that it searches you like the noonday sun, and your deepest dimple cannot hold a shadow? To give brilliancy to the gay scene, no doubt!—No, my dear! Society is *inspecting* you, and it finds undisguised surfaces and strong lights a convenience in the process. The dance answers the purpose of the revolving pedestal upon which the “White Captive” turns, to show us the soft, kneaded marble, which looks as if it had never been hard, in all its manifold aspects of living loveliness. No mercy for you, my love! Justice, strict justice, you shall certainly have,—neither more nor less. For, look you, there are dozens, scores, hundreds, with whom you must be weighed in the balance; and you have got to learn that the “struggle for life” Mr. Charles Darwin talks about reaches to vertebrates clad in crinoline, as well as to mollusks in shells, or articulates in jointed scales, or anything that fights for breathing-room and food and love in any coat of fur or feather! Happy they who can flash defiance from bright eyes and snowy shoulders back into the pendants of the insolent lustres!

—Miss Mahala Crane did not have these reflections; and no young girl ever did, or ever will, thank Heaven! Her keen eyes sparkled under her plainly parted hair, and the green de-laine moulded itself in those unmistakable lines of natural symmetry in which Nature indulges a small shopkeeper’s daughter occasionally as well

as a wholesale dealer's young ladies. She would have liked a new dress as much as any other girl, but she meant to go and have a good time at any rate.

The guests were now arriving in the drawing-room pretty fast, and the Colonel's hand began to burn a good deal with the sharp squeezes which many of the visitors gave it. Conversation, which had begun like a summer-shower, in scattering drops, was fast becoming continuous, and occasionally rising into gusty swells, with now and then a broad-chested laugh from some Captain or Major or other military personage, — for it may be noted that all large and loud men in the unpaved districts bear military titles.

Deacon Soper came up presently, and entered into conversation with Colonel Sprowle.

"I hope to see our pastor present this evenin'," said the Deacon.

"I don't feel quite sure," the Colonel answered. "His dyspepsy has been bad on him lately. He wrote to say, that, Providence permittin', it would be agreeable to him to take a part in the exercises of the evenin'; but I mistrusted he didn't mean to come. To tell the truth, Deacon Soper, I rather guess he don't like the idee of dancin', and some of the other little arrangements."

"Well," said the Deacon, "I know there's some condemns dancin'. I've heerd a good deal of talk about it among the folks round. Some

have it that it never brings a blessin' on a house to have dancin' in it. Judge Tileston died, you remember, within a month after he had his great ball, twelve year ago, and some thought it was in the natur' of a judgment. I don't believe in any of them notions. If a man happened to be struck dead the night after he'd been givin' a ball," (the Colonel loosened his black stock a little, and winked and swallowed two or three times,) "I shouldn't call it a judgment,— I should call it a coincidence. But I'm a little afraid our pastor won't come. Somethin' or other's the matter with Mr. Fairweather. I should sooner expect to see the old Doctor come over out of the Orthodox parsonage-house."

"I've asked him," said the Colonel.

"Well?" said Deacon Soper.

"He said he should like to come, but he didn't know what his people would say. For his part, he loved to see young folks havin' their sports together, and very often felt as if he should like to be one of 'em himself. 'But,' says I, 'Doctor, I don't say there won't be a little dancin'.' 'Don't!' says he, 'for I want Letty to go,' (she's his granddaughter that's been stayin' with him,) 'and Letty's mighty fond of dancin'. You know,' says the Doctor, 'it isn't my business to settle whether other people's children should dance or not.' And the Doctor looked as if he should like to rigadon and sashy across as well as the young one he was talkin' about. He's got blood in him,

the old Doctor has. I wish our little man and him would swop pulpits."

Deacon Soper started and looked up into the Colonel's face, as if to see whether he was in earnest.

Mr. Silas Peckham and his lady joined the group.

"Is this to be a Temperance Celebration, Mrs. Sprowle?" asked Mr. Silas Peckham.

Mrs. Sprowle replied, "that there would be lemonade and srub for those that preferred such drinks, but that the Colonel had given folks to understand that he didn't mean to set in judgment on the marriage in Canaan, and that those that didn't like srub and such things would find somethin' that would suit them better."

Deacon Soper's countenance assumed a certain air of restrained cheerfulness. The conversation rose into one of its gusty paroxysms just then. Master H. Frederic got behind a door and began performing the experiment of stopping and un-stopping his ears in rapid alternation, greatly rejoicing in the singular effect of mixed conversation chopped very small, like the contents of a mince-pie, — or meat pie, as it is more forcibly called in the deep-rutted villages lying along the unsalted streams. All at once it grew silent just round the door, where it had been loudest, — and the silence spread itself like a stain, till it hushed everything but a few corner-duets. A dark, sad-looking, middle-aged gentleman entered the

parlor, with a young lady on his arm, — his daughter, as it seemed, for she was not wholly unlike him in feature, and of the same dark complexion.

"Dudley Venner!" exclaimed a dozen people, in startled, but half-suppressed tones.

"What can have brought Dudley out to-night?" said Jefferson Buck, a young fellow, who had been interrupted in one of the corner-duets which he was executing in concert with Miss Susy Pettingill.

"How do I know, Jeff?" was Miss Susy's answer. Then, after a pause, — "Elsie made him come, I guess. Go ask Dr. Kittredge; he knows all about 'em both, they say."

Dr. Kittredge, the leading physician of Rockland, was a shrewd old man, who looked pretty keenly into his patients through his spectacles, and pretty widely at men, women, and things in general over them. Sixty-three years old, — just the year of the grand climacteric. A bald crown, as every doctor should have. A consulting practitioner's mouth; that is, movable round the corners while the case is under examination, but both corners well drawn down and kept so when the final opinion is made up. In fact, the Doctor was often sent for to act as "caounsel," all over the county, and beyond it. He kept three or four horses, sometimes riding in the saddle, commonly driving in a sulky, pretty fast, and looking straight before him, so that people got

out of the way of bowing to him as he passed on the road. There was some talk about his not being so long-sighted as other folks, but his old patients laughed and looked knowing when this was spoken of.

The Doctor knew a good many things besides how to drop tinctures and shake out powders. Thus, he knew a horse, and, what is harder to understand, a horse-dealer, and was a match for him. He knew what a nervous woman is, and how to manage her. He could tell at a glance when she is in that condition of unstable equilibrium in which a rough word is like a blow to her, and the touch of unmagnetized fingers reverses all her nervous currents. It is not everybody that enters into the soul of Mozart's or Beethoven's harmonies; and there are vital symphonies in B flat, and other low, sad keys, which a doctor may know as little of as a hurdy-gurdy player of the essence of those divine musical mysteries. The Doctor knew the difference between what men say and what they mean as well as most people. When he was listening to common talk, he was in the habit of looking over his spectacles; if he lifted his head so as to look through them at the person talking, he was busier with that person's thoughts than with his words.

Jefferson Buck was not bold enough to confront the Doctor with Miss Susy's question, for he did not look as if he were in the mood to answer queries put by curious young people. His eyes

were fixed steadily on the dark girl, every movement of whom he seemed to follow.

She was, indeed, an apparition of wild beauty, so unlike the girls about her that it seemed nothing more than natural, that, when she moved, the groups should part to let her pass through them, and that she should carry the centre of all looks and thoughts with her. She was dressed to please her own fancy, evidently, with small regard to the modes declared correct by the Rockland milliners and mantua-makers. Her heavy black hair lay in a braided coil, with a long gold pin shot through it like a javelin. Round her neck was a golden *torque*, a round, cord-like chain, such as the Gauls used to wear: the "Dying Gladiator" has it. Her dress was a grayish watered silk; her collar was pinned with a flashing diamond brooch, the stones looking as fresh as morning dew-drops, but the silver setting of the past generation; her arms were bare, round, but slender rather than large, in keeping with her lithe round figure. On her wrists she wore bracelets: one was a circlet of enamelled scales; the other looked as if it might have been Cleopatra's asp, with its body turned to gold and its eyes to emeralds.

Her father — for Dudley Venner was her father — looked like a man of culture and breeding, but melancholy and with a distracted air, as one whose life had met some fatal cross or blight. He saluted hardly anybody except his entertainers and the Doctor. One would have said, to

look at him, that he was not at the party by choice; and it was natural enough to think, with Susy Pettingill, that it must have been a freak of the dark girl's which brought him there, for he had the air of a shy and sad-hearted recluse.

It was hard to say what could have brought Elsie Venner to the party. Hardly anybody seemed to know her, and she seemed not at all disposed to make acquaintances. Here and there was one of the older girls from the Institute, but she appeared to have nothing in common with them. Even in the school-room, it may be remembered, she sat apart by her own choice, and now in the midst of the crowd she made a circle of isolation round herself. Drawing her arm out of her father's, she stood against the wall, and looked, with a strange, cold glitter in her eyes, at the crowd which moved and babbled before her.

The old Doctor came up to her by-and-by.

"Well, Elsie, I am quite surprised to find you here. Do tell me how you happened to do such a good-natured thing as to let us see you at such a great party."

"It's been dull at the mansion-house," she said, "and I wanted to get out of it. It's too lonely there,—there's nobody to hate since Dick's gone."

The Doctor laughed good-naturedly, as if this were an amusing bit of pleasantry,—but he lifted his head and dropped his eyes a little, so as to see her through his spectacles. She narrowed

her lids slightly, as one often sees a sleepy cat narrow hers, — somewhat as you may remember our famous Margaret used to, if you remember her at all, — so that her eyes looked very small, but bright as the diamonds on her breast. The old Doctor felt very oddly as she looked at him; he did not like the feeling, so he dropped his head and lifted his eyes and looked at her *over* his spectacles again.

“And how have you all been at the mansion-house?” said the Doctor.

“Oh, well enough. But Dick’s gone, and there’s nobody left but Dudley and I and the people. I’m tired of it. What kills anybody quickest, Doctor?” Then, in a whisper, “I ran away again the other day, you know.”

“Where did you go?” The Doctor spoke in a low, serious tone.

“Oh, to the old place. Here, I brought this for you.”

The Doctor started as she handed him a flower of the *Atragene Americana*, for he knew that there was only one spot where it grew, and that not one where any rash foot, least of all a thin-shod woman’s foot, should venture.

“How long were you gone?” said the Doctor.

“Only one night. You should have heard the horns blowing and the guns firing. Dudley was frightened out of his wits. Old Sophy told him she’d had a dream, and that I should be found in Dead-Man’s Hollow, with a great rock lying

on me. They hunted all over it, but they didn't find me, — I was farther up."

Doctor Kittredge looked cloudy and worried while she was speaking, but forced a pleasant professional smile, as he said cheerily, and as if wishing to change the subject, —

"Have a good dance this evening, Elsie. The fiddlers are tuning up. Where's the young master? Has he come yet? or is he going to be late, with the other great folks?"

The girl turned away without answering, and looked toward the door.

The "great folks," meaning the mansion-house gentry, were just beginning to come; Dudley Venner and his daughter had been the first of them. Judge Thornton, white-headed, fresh-faced, as good at sixty as he was at forty, with a youngish second wife, and one noble daughter, Arabella, who, they said, knew as much law as her father, a stately, Portia-like girl, fit for a premier's wife, not like to find her match even in the great cities she sometimes visited; the Trecothicks, the family of a merchant, (in the larger sense,) who, having made himself rich enough by the time he had reached middle life, threw down his ledger as Sylla did his dagger, and retired to make a little paradise around him in one of the stateliest residences of the town, a family inheritance; the Vaughans, an old Rockland race, descended from its first settlers, Toryish in tendency in Revolutionary times, and barely escaping confiscation

or worse; the Dunhams, a new family, dating its gentility only as far back as the Honorable Washington Dunham, M. C., but turning out a clever boy or two that went to college, and some showy girls with white necks and fat arms who had picked up professional husbands: these were the principal mansion-house people. All of them had made it a point to come; and as each of them entered, it seemed to Colonel and Mrs. Sprowle that the lamps burned up with a more cheerful light, and that the fiddles which sounded from the uncarpeted room were all half a tone higher and half a beat quicker.

Mr. Bernard came in later than any of them; he had been busy with his new duties. He looked well; and that is saying a good deal; for nothing but a gentleman is endurable in full dress. Hair that masses well, a head set on with an air, a neckerchief tied cleverly by an easy, practised hand, close-fitting gloves, feet well shaped and well covered,—these advantages can make us forgive the odious sable broadcloth suit, which appears to have been adopted by society on the same principle that condemned all the Venetian gondolas to perpetual and uniform blackness. Mr. Bernard, introduced by Mr. Geordie, made his bow to the Colonel and his lady and to Miss Matilda, from whom he got a particularly gracious curtsy, and then began looking about him for acquaintances. He found two or three faces he knew,—many more strangers. There was Silas Peckham,

— there was no mistaking him; there was the inelastic amplitude of Mrs. Peckham; few of the Apollinean girls, of course, they not being recognized members of society,— but there is one with the flame in her cheeks and the fire in her eyes, the girl of vigorous tints and emphatic outlines, whom we saw entering the school-room the other day. Old Judge Thornton has his eyes on her, and the Colonel steals a look every now and then at the red brooch which lifts itself so superbly into the light, as if he thought it a wonderfully becoming ornament. Mr. Bernard himself was not displeased with the general effect of the rich-blooded school-girl, as she stood under the bright lamps, fanning herself in the warm, languid air, fixed in a kind of passionate surprise at the new life which seemed to be flowering out in her consciousness. Perhaps he looked at her somewhat steadily, as some others had done; at any rate, she seemed to feel that she was looked at, as people often do, and, turning her eyes suddenly on him, caught his own on her face, gave him a half-bashful smile, and threw in a blush involuntarily which made it more charming.

“What can I do better,” he said to himself, “than have a dance with Rosa Milburn?” So he carried his handsome pupil into the next room and took his place with her in a cotillon. Whether the breath of the Goddess of Love could intoxicate like the cup of Circe,— whether a woman is ever phosphorescent with the lumi-

nous vapor of life that she exhales, — these and other questions which relate to occult influences exercised by certain women, we will not now discuss. It is enough that Mr. Bernard was sensible of a strange fascination, not wholly new to him, nor unprecedented in the history of human experience, but always a revelation when it comes over us for the first or the hundredth time, so pale is the most recent memory by the side of the passing moment with the flush of any newborn passion on its cheek. Remember that Nature makes every man love all women, and trusts the trivial matter of special choice to the commonest accident.

If Mr. Bernard had had nothing to distract his attention, he might have thought too much about his handsome partner, and then gone home and dreamed about her, which is always dangerous, and waked up thinking of her still, and then begun to be deeply interested in her studies, and so on, through the whole syllogism which ends in Nature's supreme *quod erat demonstrandum*. What was there to distract him or disturb him? He did not know, — but there was something. This sumptuous creature, this Eve just within the gate of an untried Paradise, untutored in the ways of the world, but on tiptoe to reach the fruit of the tree of knowledge, — alive to the moist vitality of that warm atmosphere palpitating with voices and music, as the flower of some diœcious plant which has grown in a lone corner,

and suddenly unfolding its corolla on some hot-breathing June evening, feels that the air is perfumed with strange odors and loaded with golden dust wafted from those other blossoms with which its double life is shared, — this almost over-womanized woman might well have bewitched him, but that he had a vague sense of a counter-charm. It was, perhaps, only the same consciousness that some one was looking at him which he himself had just given occasion to in his partner. Presently, in one of the turns of the dance, he felt his eyes drawn to a figure he had not distinctly recognized, though he had dimly felt its presence, and saw that Elsie Venner was looking at him as if she saw nothing else but him. He was not a nervous person, like the poor lady teacher, yet the glitter of the diamond eyes affected him strangely. It seemed to disenchant the air, so full a moment before of strange attractions. He became silent, and dreamy, as it were. The round-limbed beauty at his side crushed her gauzy draperies against him, as they trod the figure of the dance together, but it was no more to him than if an old nurse had laid her hand on his sleeve. The young girl chafed at his seeming neglect, and her imperious blood mounted into her cheeks ; but he appeared unconscious of it.

“There is one of our young ladies I must speak to,” he said, — and was just leaving his partner’s side.

"Four hands all round!" shouted the first violin, — and Mr. Bernard found himself seized and whirled in a circle out of which he could not escape, and then forced to "cross over," and then to "dozy do," as the *maestro* had it, — and when, on getting back to his place, he looked for Elsie Venner, she was gone.

The dancing went on briskly. Some of the old folks looked on, others conversed in groups and pairs, and so the evening wore along, until a little after ten o'clock. About this time there was noticed an increased bustle in the passages, with a considerable opening and shutting of doors. Presently it began to be whispered about that they were going to have supper. Many, who had never been to any large party before, held their breath for a moment at this announcement. It was rather with a tremulous interest than with open hilarity that the rumor was generally received.

One point the Colonel had entirely forgotten to settle. It was a point involving not merely propriety, but perhaps principle also, or at least the good report of the house, — and he had never thought to arrange it. He took Judge Thornton aside and whispered the important question to him, — in his distress of mind, mistaking pockets and taking out his bandanna instead of his white handkerchief to wipe his forehead.

"Judge," he said, "do you think, that, before we commence refreshing ourselves at the tables,

it would be the proper thing to—crave a—to request Deacon Soper or some other elderly person—to ask a blessing?”

The Judge looked as grave as if he were about giving the opinion of the Court in the great India-rubber case.

“On the whole,” he answered, after a pause, “I should think it might, perhaps, be dispensed with on this occasion. Young folks are noisy, and it is awkward to have talking and laughing going on while a blessing is being asked. Unless a clergyman is present and makes a point of it, I think it will hardly be expected.”

The Colonel was infinitely relieved. “Judge, will you take Mrs. Sprowle in to supper?” And the Colonel returned the compliment by offering his arm to Mrs. Judge Thornton.

The door of the supper-room was now open, and the company, following the lead of the host and hostess, began to stream into it, until it was pretty well filled.

There was an awful kind of pause. Many were beginning to drop their heads and shut their eyes, in anticipation of the usual petition before a meal; some expected the music to strike up,—others, that an oration would now be delivered by the Colonel.

“Make yourselves at home, ladies and gentlemen,” said the Colonel; “good things were made to eat, and you’re welcome to all you see before you.”

So saying, he attacked a huge turkey which stood at the head of the table; and his example being followed first by the bold, then by the doubtful, and lastly by the timid, the clatter soon made the circuit of the tables. Some were shocked, however, as the Colonel had feared they would be, at the want of the customary invocation. Widow Leech, a kind of relation, who had to be invited, and who came with her old, back-country-looking string of gold beads round her neck, seemed to feel very serious about it.

"If she'd ha' known that folks would begrutch cravin' a blessin' over sech a heap o' provisions, she'd rather ha' staid t' home. It was a bad sign, when folks wasn't grateful for the baounties of Providence."

The elder Miss Spinney, to whom she made this remark, assented to it, at the same time ogling a piece of frosted cake, which she presently appropriated with great refinement of manner,—taking it between her thumb and forefinger, keeping the others well spread and the little finger in extreme divergence, with a graceful undulation of the neck, and a queer little sound in her throat, as of an *m* that wanted to get out and perished in the attempt.

The tables now presented an animated spectacle. Young fellows of the more dashing sort, with high stand-up collars and voluminous bows to their neckerchiefs, distinguished themselves by

cutting up fowls and offering portions thereof to the buxom girls these knowing ones had commonly selected.

"A bit of the wing, Roxy, or of the — under limb?"

The first laugh broke out at this, but it was premature, a *sporadic* laugh, as Dr. Kittredge would have said, which did not become epidemic. People were very solemn as yet, many of them being new to such splendid scenes, and crushed, as it were, in the presence of so much crockery and so many silver spoons, and such a variety of unusual viands and beverages. When the laugh rose around Roxy and her saucy beau, several looked in that direction with an anxious expression, as if something had happened, — a lady fainted, for instance, or a couple of lively fellows come to high words.

"Young folks will be young folks," said Deacon Soper. "No harm done. Least said soonest mended."

"Have some of these shell-oysters?" said the Colonel to Mrs. Trecothick.

A delicate emphasis on the word *shell* implied that the Colonel knew what was what. To the New England inland native, beyond the reach of the east winds, the oyster unconditioned, the oyster absolute, without a qualifying adjective, is the *pickled* oyster. Mrs. Trecothick, who knew very well that an oyster long out of his shell (as is apt to be the case with the rural bivalve) gets

homesick and loses his sprightliness, replied, with the pleasantest smile in the world, that the chicken she had been helped to was too delicate to be given up even for the greater rarity. But the word "shell-oysters" had been overheard; and there was a perceptible crowding movement towards their newly discovered habitat, a large soup-tureen.

Silas Peckham had meantime fallen upon another locality of these recent mollusks. He said nothing, but helped himself freely, and made a sign to Mrs. Peckham.

"Lorindy," he whispered, "shell-oysters!"

And ladled them out to her largely, without betraying any emotion, just as if they had been the natural inland or pickled article.

After the more solid portion of the banquet had been duly honored, the cakes and sweet preparations of various kinds began to get their share of attention. There were great cakes and little cakes, cakes with raisins in them, cakes with currants, and cakes without either; there were brown cakes and yellow cakes, frosted cakes, glazed cakes, hearts and rounds, and *jumbles*, which playful youth slip over the forefinger before spoiling their annular outline. There were moulds of *blo'monje*, of the arrowroot variety, — that being undistinguishable from such as is made with Russia isinglass. There were jellies, which had been shaking, all the time the young folks were dancing in the next room, as

if they were balancing to partners. There were built-up fabrics, called *Charlottes*, caky externally, pulpy within; there were also *marangs*, and likewise custards, — some of the indolent-fluid sort, others firm, in which every stroke of the teaspoon left a smooth, conchoidal surface like the fracture of chalcedony, with here and there a little eye like what one sees in cheeses. Nor was that most wonderful object of domestic art called *trifle* wanting, with its charming confusion of cream and cake and almonds and jam and jelly and wine and cinnamon and froth; nor yet the marvellous *floating-island*, — name suggestive of all that is romantic in the imaginations of youthful palates.

"It must have cost you a sight of work, to say nothin' of money, to get all this beautiful confectionery made for the party," said Mrs. Crane to Mrs. Sprowle.

"Well, it cost some consid'able labor, no doubt," said Mrs. Sprowle. "Matilda and our girls and I made 'most all the cake with our own hands, and we all feel some tired; but if folks get what suits 'em, we don't begrudge the time nor the work. But I do feel thirsty," said the poor lady, "and I think a glass of srub would do my throat good; it's dreadful dry. Mr. Peckham, would you be so polite as to pass me a glass of srub?"

Silas Peckham bowed with great alacrity, and took from the table a small glass cup, containing

a fluid reddish in hue and subacid in taste. This was *srub*, a beverage in local repute, of questionable nature, but suspected of owing its color and sharpness to some kind of syrup derived from the maroon-colored fruit of the sumac. There were similar small cups on the table filled with lemonade, and here and there a decanter of Madeira wine, of the Marsala kind, which some prefer to, and many more cannot distinguish from, that which comes from the Atlantic island.

"Take a glass of wine, Judge," said the Colonel; "here is an article that I rather think 'll suit you."

The Judge knew something of wines, and could tell all the famous old Madeiras from each other,—"Eclipse," "Juno," the almost fabulously scarce and precious "White-top," and the rest. He struck the nativity of the Mediterranean Madeira before it had fairly moistened his lip.

"A sound wine, Colonel, and I should think of a genuine vintage. Your very good health."

"Deacon Soper," said the Colonel, "here is some Madary Judge Thornton recommends. Let me fill you a glass of it."

The Deacon's eyes glistened. He was one of those consistent Christians who stick firmly by the first miracle and Paul's advice to Timothy.

"A little good wine won't hurt anybody," said the Deacon. "Plenty,—plenty,—plenty. There!" He had not withdrawn his glass, while

the Colonel was pouring, for fear it should spill; and now it was running over.

— It is very odd how all a man's philosophy and theology are at the mercy of a few drops of a fluid which the chemists say consists of nothing but C 4, O 2, H 6. The Deacon's theology fell off several points towards latitudinarianism in the course of the next ten minutes. He had a deep inward sense that everything was as it should be, human nature included. The little accidents of humanity, known collectively to moralists as sin, looked very venial to his growing sense of universal brotherhood and benevolence.

"It will all come right," the Deacon said to himself, — "I feel a joyful conviction that everything is for the best. I am favored with a blessed peace of mind, and a very precious season of good feelin' toward my fellow-creturs."

A lusty young fellow happened to make a quick step backward just at that instant, and put his heel, with his weight on top of it, upon the Deacon's toes.

"Aigh! What the d' d' didos are y' abaout with them great huffs o' yourn?" said the Deacon, with an expression upon his features not exactly that of peace and good-will to man. The lusty young fellow apologized; but the Deacon's face did not come right, and his theology backed round several points in the direction of total depravity.

Some of the dashing young men in stand-up

collars and extensive neck-ties, encouraged by Mr. Geordie, made quite free with the "Maddary," and even induced some of the more stylish girls—not of the mansion-house set, but of the tip-top two-story families—to taste a little. Most of these young ladies made faces at it, and declared it was "perfectly horrid," with that aspect of veracity peculiar to their age and sex.

About this time a movement was made on the part of some of the mansion-house people to leave the supper-table. Miss Jane Trecothick had quietly hinted to her mother that she had had enough of it. Miss Arabella Thornton had whispered to her father that he had better adjourn this court to the next room. There were signs of migration,—a loosening of people in their places,—a looking about for arms to hitch on to.

"Stop!" said the Colonel. "There's something coming yet, — Ice-cream!"

The great folks saw that the play was not over yet, and that it was only polite to stay and see it out. The word "Ice-Cream" was no sooner whispered than it passed from one to another all down the tables. The effect was what might have been anticipated. Many of the guests had never seen this celebrated product of human skill, and to all the two-story population of Rockland it was the last expression of the art of pleasing and astonishing the human palate. Its appearance had been deferred for several reasons: first,

because everybody would have attacked it, if it had come in with the other luxuries; secondly, because undue apprehensions were entertained (owing to want of experience) of its tendency to deliquesce and resolve itself with alarming rapidity into puddles of creamy fluid; and, thirdly, because the surprise would make a grand climax to finish off the banquet.

There is something so audacious in the conception of ice-cream, that it is not strange that a population undebauched by the luxury of great cities looks upon it with a kind of awe and speaks of it with a certain emotion. This defiance of the seasons, forcing Nature to do her work of congelation in the face of her sultriest noon, might well inspire a timid mind with fear lest human art were revolting against the Higher Powers, and raise the same scruples which resisted the use of ether and chloroform in certain contingencies. Whatever may be the cause, it is well known that the announcement at any private rural entertainment that there is to be ice-cream produces an immediate and profound impression. It may be remarked, as aiding this impression, that exaggerated ideas are entertained as to the dangerous effects this congealed food may produce on persons not in the most robust health.

There was silence as the pyramids of ice were placed on the table, everybody looking on in admiration. The Colonel took a knife and assailed

the one at the head of the table. When he tried to cut off a slice, it didn't seem to understand it, however, and only tipped, as if it wanted to upset. The Colonel attacked it on the other side and it tipped just as badly the other way. It was awkward for the Colonel. "Permit me," said the Judge,—and he took the knife and struck a sharp slanting stroke which sliced off a piece just of the right size, and offered it to Mrs. Sprowle. This act of dexterity was much admired by the company.

The tables were all alive again.

"Lorindy, here's a plate of ice-cream," said Silas Peckham.

"Come, Mahaly," said a fresh-looking young fellow with a saucerful in each hand, "here's your ice-cream;—let's go in the corner and have a celebration, us two." And the old green delaine, with the young curves under it to make it sit well, moved off as pleased apparently as if it had been silk velvet with thousand-dollar laces over it.

"Oh, now, Miss Green! do you think it's safe to put that cold stuff into your stomick?" said the Widow Leech to a young married lady, who, finding the air rather warm, thought a little ice would cool her down very nicely. "It's jest like eatin' snowballs. You don't look very rugged; and I should be dreadful afeard, if I was you" —

"Carrie," said old Dr. Kittredge, who had overheard this, — "how well you're looking this even-

ing! But you must be tired and heated;—sit down here, and let me give you a good slice of ice-cream. How you young folks do grow up, to be sure! I don't feel quite certain whether it's you or your older sister, but I know it's somebody I call Carrie, and that I've known ever since"——

A sound something between a howl and an oath startled the company and broke off the Doctor's sentence. Everybody's eyes turned in the direction from which it came. A group instantly gathered round the person who had uttered it, who was no other than Deacon Soper.

"He's chokin'! he's chokin'!" was the first exclamation,—“slap him on the back!”

Several heavy fists beat such a tattoo on his spine that the Deacon felt as if at least one of his vertebræ would come up.

"He's black in the face," said Widow Leech,—“he's swallowed somethin' the wrong way. Where's the Doctor?—let the Doctor get to him, can't ye?”

"If you will move, my good lady, perhaps I can," said Doctor Kittredge, in a calm tone of voice.—“He's not choking, my friends,” the Doctor added immediately, when he got sight of him.

"It's apoplexy,—I told you so,—don't you see how red he is in the face?" said old Mrs. Peake, a famous woman for “nussin” sick folks,—determined to be a little ahead of the Doctor.

"It's not apoplexy," said Dr. Kittredge.

"What is it, Doctor? what is it? Will he die? Is he dead?—Here's his poor wife, the Widow Soper that is to be, if she a'n't a'ready"——

"Dó be quiet, my good woman," said Dr. Kit-tredge. — "Nothing serious, I think, Mrs. Soper. — Deacon!"

The sudden attack of Deacon Soper had begun with the extraordinary sound mentioned above. His features had immediately assumed an expression of intense pain, his eyes staring wildly, and, clapping his hands to his face, he had rocked his head backward and forward in speechless agony.

At the Doctor's sharp appeal the Deacon lifted his head.

"It's all right," said the Doctor, as soon as he saw his face. "The Deacon had a smart attack of neuralgic pain. That's all. Very severe, but not at all dangerous."

The Doctor kept his countenance, but his diaphragm was shaking the change in his waistcoat-pockets with subterranean laughter. He had looked through his spectacles and seen at once what had happened. The Deacon, not being in the habit of taking his nourishment in the congealed state, had treated the ice-cream as a pudding of a rare species, and, to make sure of doing himself justice in its distribution, had taken a large mouthful of it without the least precaution. The consequence was a sensation as if a dentist were killing the nerves of twenty-five teeth at once with hot irons, or cold ones, which would hurt rather worse.

The Deacon swallowed something with a spasmodic effort, and recovered pretty soon and received the congratulations of his friends. There were different versions of the expressions he had used at the onset of his complaint, — some of the reported exclamations involving a breach of propriety, to say the least, — but it was agreed that a man in an attack of neuralgia wasn't to be judged of by the rules that applied to other folks.

The company soon after this retired from the supper-room. The mansion-house gentry took their leave, and the two-story people soon followed. Mr. Bernard had staid an hour or two, and left soon after he found that Elsie Venner and her father had disappeared. As he passed by the dormitory of the Institute, he saw a light glimmering from one of its upper rooms, where the lady teacher was still waking. His heart ached, when he remembered, that, through all these hours of gayety, or what was meant for it, the patient girl had been at work in her little chamber; and he looked up at the silent stars, as if to see that they were watching over her. The planet Mars was burning like a red coal; the northern constellation was slanting downward about its central point of flame; and while he looked, a falling star slid from the zenith and was lost.

He reached his chamber and was soon dreaming over the Event of the Season.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MORNING AFTER.

COLONEL SPROWLE'S family arose late the next morning. The fatigues and excitements of the evening and the preparation for it were followed by a natural collapse, of which somnolence was a leading symptom. The sun shone into the window at a pretty well opened angle when the Colonel first found himself sufficiently awake to address his yet slumbering spouse.

"Sally!" said the Colonel, in a voice that was a little husky, — for he had finished off the evening with an extra glass or two of "Madary," and had a somewhat rusty and headachy sense of renewed existence, on greeting the rather advanced dawn, — "Sally!"

"Take care o' them custard-cups! There they go!"

Poor Mrs. Sprowle was fighting the party over in her dream; and as the visionary custard-cups crashed down through one lobe of her brain into another, she gave a start as if an inch of lightning from a quart Leyden jar had jumped into one of her knuckles with its sudden and lively *poonk!*

"Sally!" said the Colonel, — "wake up, wake up! What 'r' y' dreamin' abaout?"

Mrs. Sprowle raised herself, by a sort of spasm, *sur son séant*, as they say in France, — up on end, as we have it in New England. She looked first to the left, then to the right, then straight before her, apparently without seeing anything, and at last slowly settled down, with her two eyes, blank of any particular meaning, directed upon the Colonel.

"What time is't?" she said.

"Ten o'clock. What 'y' been dreamin' abaout? Y' giv a jump like a hoppergrass. Wake up, wake up! Th' party's over, and y' been asleep all the mornin'. The party's over, I tell ye! Wake up!"

"Over!" said Mrs. Sprowle, who began to define her position at last, — "over! I should think 'twas time 'twas over! It's lasted a hundud year. I've been workin' for that party longer 'n Methuselah's lifetime, sence I been asleep. The pies wouldn' bake, and the blo'monge wouldn' set, and the ice-cream wouldn' freeze, and all the folks kep' comin' 'n' comin' 'n' comin', — everybody I ever knew in all my life, — some of 'em 's been dead this twenty year 'n' more, — 'n' nothin' for 'em to eat nor drink. The fire wouldn' burn to cook anything, all we could do. We blowed with the belluses, 'n' we stuffed in paper 'n' pitch-pine kindlin's, but nothin' could make that fire burn; 'n' all the time the folks kep' comin', as if they'd

never stop, — 'n' nothin' for 'em but empty dishes, 'n' all the borrowed chaney slippin' round on the waiters 'n' chippin' 'n' crackin', — I wouldn' go through what I been through t'-night for all th' money in th' Bank, — I dō believe it's harder t' have a party than t' " —

Mrs. Sprowle stated the case strongly.

The Colonel said he didn't know how that might be. She was a better judge than he was. It was bother enough, anyhow, and he was glad that it was over. After this, the worthy pair commenced preparations for rejoining the waking world, and in due time proceeded down-stairs.

Everybody was late that morning, and nothing had got put to rights. The house looked as if a small army had been quartered in it over night. The tables were of course in huge disorder, after the protracted assault they had undergone. There had been a great battle evidently, and it had gone against the provisions. Some points had been stormed, and all their defences annihilated, but here and there were centres of resistance which had held out against all attacks, — large rounds of beef, and solid loaves of cake, against which the inexperienced had wasted their energies in the enthusiasm of youth or uninformed maturity, while the longer-headed guests were making discoveries of "shell-oysters" and "pātridges" and similar delicacies.

The breakfast was naturally of a somewhat fragmentary character. A chicken that had lost

his legs in the service of the preceding campaign was once more put on duty. A great ham stuck with cloves, as Saint Sebastian was with arrows, was again offered for martyrdom. It would have been a pleasant sight for a medical man of a speculative turn to have seen the prospect before the Colonel's family of the next week's breakfasts, dinners, and suppers. The trail that one of these great rural parties leaves after it is one of its most formidable considerations. Every door-handle in the house is suggestive of sweetmeats for the next week, at least. The most unnatural articles of diet displace the frugal but nutritious food of unconvulsed periods of existence. If there is a walking infant about the house, it will certainly have a more or less fatal fit from overmuch of some indigestible delicacy. Before the week is out, everybody will be tired to death of sugary forms of nourishment and long to see the last of the remnants of the festival.

The family had not yet arrived at this condition. On the contrary, the first inspection of the tables suggested the prospect of days of unstinted luxury; and the younger portion of the household, especially, were in a state of great excitement as the account of stock was taken with reference to future internal investments. Some curious facts came to light during these researches.

"Where's all the oranges gone to?" said Mrs. Sprowle. "I expected there'd be ever so many

of 'em left. I didn't see many of the folks eatin' oranges. Where's the skins of 'em? There ought to be six dozen orange-skins round on the plates, and there a'n't one dozen. And all the small cakes, too, and all the sugar things that was stuck on the big cakes. Has anybody counted the spoons? Some of 'em got swallowed, perhaps. I hope they was plated ones, if they did!"

The failure of the morning's orange-crop and the deficit in other expected residual delicacies were not very difficult to account for. In many of the two-story Rockland families, and in those favored households of the neighboring villages whose members had been invited to the great party, there was a very general excitement among the younger people on the morning after the great event. "Did y' bring home somethin' from the party? What is it? What is it? Is it frûtcake? Is it nuts and oranges and apples? Give me some! Give *me* some!" Such a concert of treble voices uttering accents like these had not been heard since the great Temperance Festival with the celebrated "côlation" in the open air under the trees of the Parnassian Grove,—as the place was christened by the young ladies of the Institute. The cry of the children was not in vain. From the pockets of demure fathers, from the bags of sharp-eyed spinsters, from the folded handkerchiefs of light-fingered sisters, from the tall hats of sly-winking brothers, there was a resurrection of the missing oranges and cakes and

sugar-things in many a rejoicing family-circle, enough to astonish the most hardened "caterer" that ever contracted to feed a thousand people under canvas.

The tender recollection of those dear little ones whom extreme youth or other pressing considerations detain from scenes of festivity — a trait of affection by no means uncommon among our thoughtful people — dignifies those social meetings where it is manifested, and sheds a ray of sunshine on our common nature. It is "an oasis in the desert," — to use the striking expression of the last year's "Valedictorian" of the Apollinean Institute. In the midst of so much that is purely selfish, it is delightful to meet such disinterested care for others. When a large family of children are expecting a parent's return from an entertainment, it will often require great exertions on his part to freight himself so as to meet their reasonable expectations. A few rules are worth remembering by all who attend anniversary dinners in Faneuil Hall or elsewhere. Thus: Lobsters' claws are always acceptable to children of all ages. Oranges and apples are to be taken *one at a time*, until the coat-pockets begin to become inconveniently heavy. Cakes are injured by sitting upon them; it is, therefore, well to carry a stout tin box of a size to hold as many pieces as there are children in the domestic circle. A very pleasant amusement, at the close of one of these banquets, is grabbing for the flowers with which

the table is embellished. These will please the ladies at home very greatly, and, if the children are at the same time abundantly supplied with fruits, nuts, cakes, and any little ornamental articles of confectionery which are of a nature to be unostentatiously removed, the kind-hearted parent will make a whole household happy, without any additional expense beyond the outlay for his ticket.

There were fragmentary delicacies enough left, of one kind and another, at any rate, to make all the Colonel's family uncomfortable for the next week. It bid fair to take as long to get rid of the remains of the great party as it had taken to make ready for it.

In the mean time Mr. Bernard had been dreaming, as young men dream, of gliding shapes with bright eyes and burning cheeks, strangely blended with red planets and hissing meteors, and, shining over all, the white, unwandering star of the North, girt with its tethered constellations.

After breakfast he walked into the parlor, where he found Miss Darley. She was alone, and, holding a school-book in her hand, was at work with one of the morning's lessons. She hardly noticed him as he entered, being very busy with her book, — and he paused a moment before speaking, and looked at her with a kind of reverence. It would not have been strictly true to call her beautiful. For years, — since her earliest womanhood, — those slender hands had taken the bread which

repaid the toil of heart and brain from the coarse palms which offered it in the world's rude market. It was not for herself alone that she had bartered away the life of her youth, that she had breathed the hot air of school-rooms, that she had forced her intelligence to posture before her will, as the exigencies of her place required, — waking to mental labor, — sleeping to dream of problems, — rolling up the stone of education for an endless twelvemonth's term, to find it at the bottom of the hill again when another year called her to its renewed duties, — schooling her temper in unending inward and outward conflicts, until neither dulness nor obstinacy nor ingratitude nor insolence could reach her serene self-possession. Not for herself alone. Poorly as her prodigal labors were repaid in proportion to the waste of life they cost, her value was too well established to leave her without what, under other circumstances, would have been a more than sufficient compensation. But there were others who looked to her in their need, and so the modest fountain which might have been filled to its brim was continually drained through silent-flowing, hidden sluices.

Out of such a life, inherited from a race which had lived in conditions not unlike her own, *beauty*, in the common sense of the term, could hardly find leisure to develop and shape itself. For it must be remembered, that symmetry and elegance of features and figure, like perfectly formed crystals in the mineral world, are reached only by in-

suring a certain necessary repose to individuals and to generations. Human beauty is an agricultural product in the country, growing up in men and women as in corn and cattle, where the soil is good. It is a luxury almost monopolized by the rich in cities, bred under glass like their forced pine-apples and peaches. Both in city and country, the evolution of the physical harmonies which make music to our eyes requires a combination of favorable circumstances, of which alternations of unburdened tranquillity with intervals of varied excitement of mind and body are among the most important. Where sufficient excitement is wanting, as often happens in the country, the features, however rich in red and white, get heavy, and the movements sluggish; where excitement is furnished in excess, as is frequently the case in cities, the contours and colors are impoverished, and the nerves begin to make their existence known to the consciousness, as the face very soon informs us.

Helen Darley could not, in the nature of things, have possessed the kind of beauty which pleases the common taste. Her eye was calm, sad-looking, her features very still, except when her pleasant smile changed them for a moment, all her outlines were delicate, her voice was very gentle, but somewhat subdued by years of thoughtful labor, and on her smooth forehead one little hinted line whispered already that Care was beginning to mark the trace which Time sooner or

later would make a furrow. She could not be a beauty; if she had been, it would have been much harder for many persons to be interested in her. For, although in the abstract we all love beauty, and although, if we were sent naked souls into some ultramundane warehouse of soulless bodies and told to select one to our liking, we should each choose a handsome one, and never think of the consequences, — it is quite certain that beauty carries an atmosphere of repulsion as well as of attraction with it, alike in both sexes. We may be well assured that there are many persons who no more think of specializing their love of the other sex upon one endowed with signal beauty, than they think of wanting great diamonds or thousand-dollar horses. No man or woman can appropriate beauty without paying for it, — in endowments, in fortune, in position, in self-surrender, or other valuable stock; and there are a great many who are too poor, too ordinary, too humble, too busy, too proud, to pay any of these prices for it. So the unbeautiful get many more lovers than the beauties; only, as there are more of them, their lovers are spread thinner and do not make so much show.

The young master stood looking at Helen Darley with a kind of tender admiration. She was such a picture of the martyr by the slow social combustive process, that it almost seemed to him he could see a pale lambent *nimbus* round her head.

"I did not see you at the great party last evening," he said, presently.

She looked up and answered, "No. I have not much taste for such large companies. Besides, I do not feel as if my time belonged to me after it has been paid for. There is always something to do, some lesson or exercise, — and it so happened, I was very busy last night with the new problems in geometry. I hope you had a good time."

"Very. Two or three of our girls were there. Rosa Milburn. What a beauty she is! I wonder what she feeds on! Wine and musk and chloroform and coals of fire, I believe; I didn't think there was such color and flavor in a woman outside the tropics."

Miss Darley smiled rather faintly; the imagery was not just to her taste: *femineity* often finds it very hard to accept the fact of *muliebrity*.

"Was" — ?

She stopped short; but her question had asked itself.

"Elsie there? She was, for an hour or so. She looked frightfully handsome. I meant to have spoken to her, but she slipped away before I knew it."

"I thought she meant to go to the party," said Miss Darley. "Did she look at you?"

"She did. Why?"

"And you did not speak to her?"

"No. I should have spoken to her, but she

was gone when I looked for her. A strange creature! Isn't there an odd sort of fascination about her? You have not explained all the mystery about the girl. What does she come to this school for? She seems to do pretty much as she likes about studying."

Miss Darley answered in very low tones. "It was a fancy of hers to come, and they let her have her way. I don't know what there is about her, except that she seems to take my life out of me when she looks at me. I don't like to ask other people about our girls. She says very little to anybody, and studies, or makes believe to study, almost what she likes. I don't know what she is," (Miss Darley laid her hand, trembling, on the young master's sleeve,) "but I can tell when she is in the room without seeing or hearing her. Oh, Mr. Langdon, I am weak and nervous, and no doubt foolish, — but — if there were women now, as in the days of our Saviour, possessed of devils, I should think there was something not human looking out of Elsie Venner's eyes!"

The poor girl's breast rose and fell tumultuously as she spoke, and her voice labored, as if some obstruction were rising in her throat.

A scene might possibly have come of it, but the door opened. Mr. Silas Peckham. Miss Darley got away as soon as she well could.

"Why did not Miss Darley go to the party last evening?" said Mr. Bernard.

"Well, the fact is," answered Mr. Silas Peck-

ham, "Miss Darley, she's pooty much took up with the school. She's an industris young woman, — yis, she *is* industris, — but perhaps she a'n't quite so spry a worker as some. Maybe, considerin' she's paid for her time, she isn't fur out o' the way in occoopyin' herself evenin's, — that is, if so be she a'n't smart enough to finish up all her work in the daytime. Edooocation is the great business of the Institoot. Amoosements are objec's of a secondary natur', accordin' to my v'oo." [The unspellable pronounciation of this word is the touchstone of New England Brahminism.]

Mr. Bernard drew a deep breath, his thin nostrils dilating, as if the air did not rush in fast enough to cool his blood, while Silas Peckham was speaking. The Head of the Apollinean Institute delivered himself of these judicious sentiments in that peculiar acid, penetrating tone, thickened with a nasal twang, which not rarely becomes hereditary after three or four generations raised upon east winds, salt fish, and large, white-bellied, pickled cucumbers. He spoke deliberately, as if weighing his words well, so that, during his few remarks, Mr. Bernard had time for a mental accompaniment with variations, accented by certain bodily changes, which escaped Mr. Peckham's observation. First there was a feeling of disgust and shame at hearing Helen Darley spoken of like a dumb working animal. That sent the blood up into his cheeks. Then the slur upon her probable want of force — *her* incapacity,

who made the character of the school and left this man to pocket its profits — sent a thrill of the old Wentworth fire through him, so that his muscles hardened, his hands closed, and he took the measure of Mr. Silas Peckham, to see if his head would strike the wall in case he went over backwards all of a sudden. This would not do, of course, and so the thrill passed off and the muscles softened again. Then came that state of tenderness in the heart, overlying wrath in the stomach, in which the eyes grow moist like a woman's, and there is also a great boiling-up of objectionable terms out of the deep-water vocabulary, so that Prudence and Propriety and all the other pious Ps have to jump upon the lid of speech to keep them from boiling *over* into fierce articulation. All this was internal, chiefly, and of course not recognized by Mr. Silas Peckham. The idea, that any full-grown, sensible man should have any other notion than that of getting the most work for the least money out of his assistants, had never suggested itself to him.

Mr. Bernard had gone through this paroxysm, and cooled down, in the period while Mr. Peckham was uttering these words in his thin, shallow whine, twanging up into the frontal sinuses. What was the use of losing his temper and throwing away his place, and so, among the consequences which would necessarily follow, leaving the poor lady-teacher without a friend to stand by her ready to lay his hand on the grand-

inquisitor before the windlass of his rack had taken one turn too many?

"No doubt, Mr. Peckham," he said, in a grave, calm voice, "there is a great deal of work to be done in the school; but perhaps we can distribute the duties a little more evenly after a time. I shall look over the girls' themes myself, after this week. Perhaps there will be some other parts of her labor that I can take on myself. We can arrange a new programme of studies and recitations."

"We can do that," said Mr. Silas Peckham. "But I don't propose mater'ly alterin' Miss Darley's dooties. I don't think she works to hurt herself. Some of the Trustees have proposed interdoosin' new branches of study, and I expect you will be pooty much occoopied with the dooties that belong to your place. On the Sahbath you will be able to attend divine service three times, which is expected of our teachers. I shall continoo myself to give Sahbath Scriptur'-readin's to the young ladies. That is a solemn dooty I can't make up my mind to commit to other people. My teachers enjoy the Lord's day as a day of rest. In it they do no manner of work, — except in cases of necessity or mercy, such as fillin' out diplomas, or when we git crowded jest at the end of a term, or when there is an extry number of p'oopils, or other Providential call to dispense with the ordinance."

Mr. Bernard had a fine glow in his cheeks by

this time, — doubtless kindled by the thought of the kind consideration Mr. Peckham showed for his subordinates in allowing them the between-meeting-time on Sundays except for some special reason. But the morning was wearing away ; so he went to the school-room, taking leave very properly of his respected principal, who soon took his hat and departed.

Mr. Peckham visited certain "stores" or shops, where he made inquiries after various articles in the provision-line, and effected a purchase or two. Two or three barrels of potatoes, which had sprouted in a promising way, he secured at a bargain. A side of feminine beef was also obtained at a low figure. He was entirely satisfied with a couple of barrels of flour, which, being invoiced "slightly damaged," were to be had at a reasonable price.

After this, Silas Peckham felt in good spirits. He had done a pretty stroke of business. It came into his head whether he might not follow it up with a still more brilliant speculation. So he turned his steps in the direction of Colonel Sprowle's.

It was now eleven o'clock, and the battle-field of last evening was as we left it. Mr. Peckham's visit was unexpected, perhaps not very well timed, but the Colonel received him civilly.

"Beautifully lighted, — these rooms last night!" said Mr. Peckham. "Winter-strained?"

The Colonel nodded.

"How much do you pay for your winter-strained?"

The Colonel told him the price.

"Very hahnsome supper, — very hahnsome! Nothin' ever seen like it in Rockland. Must have been a great heap of things left over."

The compliment was not ungrateful, and the Colonel acknowledged it by smiling and saying, "I should think the' was a trifle! Come and look."

When Silas Peckham saw how many delicacies had survived the evening's conflict, his commercial spirit rose at once to the point of a proposal.

"Colonel Sprowle," said he, "there's meat and cakes and pies and pickles enough on that table to spread a hahnsome cōlation. If you'd like to trade reasonable, I think perhaps I should be willin' to take 'em off your hands. There's been a talk about our havin' a celebration in the Parnassian Grove, and I think I could work in what your folks don't want and make myself whole by chargin' a small sum for tickets. Broken meats, of course, a'n't of the same valoo as fresh provisions; so I think you might be willin' to trade reasonable."

Mr. Peckham paused and rested on his proposal. It would not, perhaps, have been very extraordinary, if Colonel Sprowle had entertained the proposition. There is no telling beforehand how such things will strike people. It didn't

happen to strike the Colonel favorably. He had a little red-blooded manhood in him.

"Sell you them things to make a colation out of?" the Colonel replied. "Walk up to that table, Mr. Peckham, and help yourself! Fill your pockets, Mr. Peckham! Fetch a basket, and our hired folks shall fill it full for ye! Send a cart, if y' like, 'n' carry off them leavin's to make a celebration for your pupils with! Only let me tell ye this:—as sure's my name's Hezekiah Spraowle, you'll be known through the taown 'n' through the caounty, from that day forrard, as the Principal of the Broken-Victuals Institoot!"

Even provincial human-nature sometimes has a touch of sublimity about it. Mr. Silas Peckham had gone a little deeper than he meant, and come upon the "hard pan," as the well-diggers call it, of the Colonel's character, before he thought of it. A militia-colonel standing on his sentiments is not to be despised. That was shown pretty well in New England two or three generations ago. There were a good many plain officers that talked about their "rigiment" and their "caounty" who knew very well how to say "Make ready!" "Take aim!" "Fire!"—in the face of a line of grenadiers with bullets in their guns and bayonets on them. And though a rustic uniform is not always unexceptionable in its cut and trimmings, yet there was many an ill-made coat in those old times that was good enough to be shown to the enemy's front rank,

too often to be left on the field with a round hole in its left lapel that matched another going right through the brave heart of the plain country captain or major or colonel who was buried in it under the crimson turf.

Mr. Silas Peckham said little or nothing. His sensibilities were not acute, but he perceived that he had made a miscalculation. He hoped that there was no offence, — thought it might have been mutooally agreeable, concludod he would give up the idee of a cōlation, and backed himself out as if unwilling to expose the less guarded aspect of his person to the risk of accelerating impulses.

The Colopel shut the door, — cast his eye on the toe of his right boot, as if it had had a strong temptation, — looked at his watch, then round the room, and, going to a cupboard, swallowed a glass of deep-red brandy and water to compose his feelings.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DOCTOR ORDERS THE BEST SULKY.

(With a Digression on "Hired Help.")

"ABEL! Slip Cassia into the new sulky, and fetch her round."

Abel was Dr. Kittredge's hired man. He was born in New Hampshire, a queer sort of a State, with fat streaks of soil and population where they breed giants in mind and body, and lean streaks which export imperfectly nourished young men with promising but neglected appetites, who may be found in great numbers in all the large towns, or could be until of late years, when they have been half driven out of their favorite basement-stories by foreigners, and half coaxed away from them by California. New Hampshire is in more than one sense the Switzerland of New England. The "Granite State" being naturally enough deficient in pudding-stone, its children are apt to wander southward in search of that deposit, — in the unpetrified condition.

Abel Stebbins was a good specimen of that extraordinary hybrid or mule between democ-

racy and chrysocracy, a native-born New-England serving-man. The Old World has nothing at all like him. He is at once an emperor and a subordinate. In one hand he holds one five-millionth part (be the same more or less) of the power that sways the destinies of the Great Republic. His other hand is in your boot, which he is about to polish. It is impossible to turn a fellow-citizen whose vote may make his master — say, rather, employer — Governor or President, or who may be one or both himself, into a flunky. That article must be imported ready-made from other centres of civilization. When a New Englander has lost his self-respect as a citizen and as a man, he is demoralized, and cannot be trusted with the money to pay for a dinner.

It may be supposed, therefore, that this fractional emperor, this continent-shaper, finds his position awkward when he goes into service, and that his employer is apt to find it still more embarrassing. It is always under protest that the hired man does his duty. Every act of service is subject to the drawback, "I am as good as you are." This is so common, at least, as almost to be the rule, and partly accounts for the rapid disappearance of the indigenous "domestic" from the basements above mentioned. Paleontologists will by-and-by be examining the floors of our kitchens for tracks of the extinct native species of serving-man. The female of the same race is fast dying out; indeed, the time is not far

distant when all the varieties of young *woman* will have vanished from New England, as the dodo has perished in the Mauritius. The young *lady* is all that we shall have left, and the mop and duster of the last Almira or Loïzy will be stared at by generations of Bridgets and Noras as that famous head and foot of the lost bird are stared at in the Ashmolean Museum.

Abel Stebbins, the Doctor's man, took the true American view of his difficult position. He sold his time to the Doctor, and, having sold it, he took care to fulfil his half of the bargain. The Doctor, on his part, treated him, not like a gentleman, because one does not order a gentleman to bring up his horse or run his errands, but he treated him like a man. Every order was given in courteous terms. His reasonable privileges were respected as much as if they had been guaranteed under hand and seal. The Doctor lent him books from his own library, and gave him all friendly counsel, as if he were a son or a younger brother.

Abel had Revolutionary blood in his veins, and though he saw fit to "hire out," he could never stand the word "servant," or consider himself the inferior one of the two high contracting parties. When he came to live with the Doctor, he made up his mind he would dismiss the old gentleman, if he did not behave according to his notions of propriety. But he soon found that the Doctor was one of the right sort, and so determined to keep him. The Doctor soon found, on his side,

that he had a trustworthy, intelligent fellow, who would be invaluable to him, if he only let him have his own way of doing what was to be done.

The Doctor's hired man had not the manners of a French valet. He was grave and taciturn for the most part, he never bowed and rarely smiled, but was always at work in the daytime and always reading in the evening. He was hostler, and did all the housework that a man could properly do, would go to the door or "tend table," bought the provisions for the family, — in short, did almost everything for them but get their clothing. There was no office in a perfectly appointed household, from that of steward down to that of stable-boy, which he did not cheerfully assume. His round of work not consuming all his energies, he must needs cultivate the Doctor's garden, which he kept in one perpetual bloom, from the blowing of the first crocus to the fading of the last dahlia.

This garden was Abel's poem. Its half-dozen beds were so many cantos. Nature crowded them for him with imagery such as no Laureate could copy in the cold mosaic of language. The rhythm of alternating dawn and sunset, the strophe and antistrophe still perceptible through all the sudden shifts of our dithyrambic seasons and echoed in corresponding floral harmonies, made melody in the soul of Abel, the plain serving-man. It softened his whole otherwise rigid aspect. He worshipped God according to the strict way of his fathers; but a florist's Puritanism is always col-

ored by the petals of his flowers, — and Nature never shows him a black corolla.

He may or may not figure again in this narrative; but as there must be some who confound the New-England *hired man*, native-born, with the *servant* of foreign birth, and as there is the difference of two continents and two civilizations between them, it did not seem fair to let Abel bring round the Doctor's mare and sulky without touching his features in half-shadow into our background.

The Doctor's mare, Cassia, was so called by her master from her cinnamon color, cassia being one of the professional names for that spice or drug. She was of the shade we call sorrel, or, as an Englishman would perhaps say, chestnut, — a genuine "Morgan" mare, with a low forehead, as is common in this breed, but with strong quarters and flat hocks, well ribbed up, with a good eye and a pair of lively ears, — a first-rate doctor's beast, — would stand until her harness dropped off her back at the door of a tedious case, and trot over hill and dale thirty miles in three hours, if there was a child in the next county with a bean in its windpipe and the Doctor gave her a hint of the fact. Cassia was not large, but she had a good deal of action, and was the Doctor's show-horse. There were two other animals in his stable: Quassia or Quashy, the black horse, and Caustic, the old bay, with whom he jogged round the village.

"A long ride to-day?" said Abel, as he brought up the equipage.

"Just out of the village,—that's all.—There's a kink in her mane,—pull it out, will you?"

"Goin' to visit some of the great folks," Abel said to himself. "Wonder who it is."—Then to the Doctor,— "Anybody get sick at Sprowles's? They say Deacon Soper had a fit, after eatin' some o' their frozen victuals."

The Doctor smiled. He guessed the Deacon would do well enough. He was only going to ride over to the Dudley mansion-house.

CHAPTER X.

THE DOCTOR CALLS ON ELSIE VENNER.

IF that primitive physician, CHIRON, M. D., appears as a Centaur, as we look at him through the lapse of thirty centuries, the modern country-doctor, if he could be seen about thirty miles off, could not be distinguished from a wheel-animalcule. He *inhabits* a wheel-carriage. He thinks of stationary dwellings as Long Tom Coffin did of land in general; a house may be well enough for incidental purposes, but for a "stiddy" residence give him a "kerridge." If he is classified in the Linnæan scale, he must be set down thus: Genus *Homo*; Species *Rotifer infusorius*, — the wheel-animal of infusions.

The Dudley mansion was not a mile from the Doctor's; but it never occurred to him to think of walking to see any of his patients' families, if he had any professional object in his visit. Whenever the narrow sulky turned in at a gate, the rustic who was digging potatoes, or hoeing corn, or *swishing* through the grass with his scythe, in wave-like crescents, or stepping short behind a loaded wheelbarrow, or trudging lazily by the side

of the swinging, loose-throated, short-legged oxen, rocking along the road as if they had just been landed after a three-months' voyage, — the toiling native, whatever he was doing, stopped and looked up at the house the Doctor was visiting.

"Somebody sick over there t' Haynes's. Guess th' old man's ailin' ag'in. Winder's haäf-way open in the chamber, — shouldn' wonder 'f he was dead and laid aout. Docterin' a'n't no use, when y' see th' winders open like that. Wahl, money a'n't much to speak of to th' old man naow! He don' want but *tew cents*, — 'n' old Widah Peake, she knows what he wants them for!"

Or again, —

"Measles raound pooty thick. Briggs's folks buried two children with 'em laäs' week. Th' ol' Doctor, he'd h' ker'd 'em through. Struck in 'n' p'dooiced mo't'f'cation, — so they say."

This is only meant as a sample of the kind of way they used to think or talk, when the narrow sulky turned in at the gate of some house where there was a visit to be made.

Oh, that narrow sulky! What hopes, what fears, what comfort, what anguish, what despair, in the roll of its coming or its parting wheels! In the spring, when the old people get the coughs which give them a few shakes and their lives drop in pieces like the ashes of a burned thread which have kept the threadlike shape until they were stirred, — in the hot summer noons, when the

strong man comes in from the fields, like the son of the Shunamite, crying, "My head, my head," — in the dying autumn days, when youth and maiden lie fever-stricken in many a household, still-faced, dull-eyed, dark-flushed, dry-lipped, low-muttering in their daylight dreams, their fingers moving singly like those of slumbering harpers, — in the dead winter, when the white plague of the North has caged its wasted victims, shuddering as they think of the frozen soil which must be quarried like rock to receive them, if their perpetual convalescence should happen to be interfered with by any untoward accident, — at every season, the narrow sulky rolled round freighted with unmeasured burdens of joy and woe.

The Doctor drove along the southern foot of The Mountain. The "Dudley mansion" was near the eastern edge of this declivity, where it rose steepest, with baldest cliffs and densest patches of overhanging wood. It seemed almost too steep to climb, but a practised eye could see from a distance the zigzag lines of the sheep-paths which scaled it like miniature Alpine roads. A few hundred feet up The Mountain's side was a dark, deep dell, unwooded, save for a few spindling, crazy-looking hackmatacks or native larches, with pallid green tufts sticking out fantastically all over them. It shelved so deeply, that, while the hemlock-tassels were swinging on the trees around its border, all would be still at its springy bottom, save that perhaps a single fern would

wave slowly backward and forward like a sabre, with a twist as of a feathered oar,—and this, when not a breath could be felt, and every other stem and blade were motionless. There was an old story of one having perished here in the winter of '86, and his body having been found in the spring,—whence its common name of “Dead-Man’s Hollow.” Higher up there were huge cliffs with chasms, and, it was thought, concealed caves, where in old times they said that Tories lay hid,—some hinted not without occasional aid and comfort from the Dudleys then living in the mansion-house. Still higher and farther west lay the accursed ledge,—shunned by all, unless it were now and then a daring youth, or a wandering naturalist who ventured to its edge in the hope of securing some infantile *Crotalus durissus*, who had not yet cut his poison-teeth.

Long, long ago, in old Colonial times, the Honorable Thomas Dudley, Esquire, a man of note and name and great resources, allied by descent to the family of “Tom Dudley,” as the early Governor is sometimes irreverently called by our most venerable, but still youthful antiquary,—and to the other public Dudleys, of course,—of all of whom he made small account, as being himself an English gentleman, with little taste for the splendors of provincial office,—early in the last century, Thomas Dudley had built this mansion. For several generations it had been dwelt in by descendants of the same name, but soon

after the Revolution it passed by marriage into the hands of the Venners, by whom it had ever since been held and tenanted.

As the Doctor turned an angle in the road, all at once the stately old house rose before him. It was a skilfully managed effect, as it well might be, for it was no vulgar English architect who had planned the mansion and arranged its position and approach. The old house rose before the Doctor, crowning a terraced garden, flanked at the left by an avenue of tall elms. The flower-beds were edged with box, which diffused around it that dreamy balsamic odor, full of ante-natal reminiscences of a lost Paradise, dimly fragrant as might be the bdellium of ancient Havilah, the land compassed by the river Pison that went out of Eden. The garden was somewhat neglected, but not in disgrace, — and in the time of tulips and hyacinths, of roses, of “snowballs,” of honeysuckles, of lilacs, of syringas, it was rich with blossoms.

From the front-windows of the mansion the eye reached a far blue mountain-summit, — no rounded heap, such as often shuts in a village-landscape, but a sharp peak, clean-angled as Ascutney from the Dartmouth green. A wide gap through miles of woods had opened this distant view, and showed more, perhaps, than all the labors of the architect and the landscape-gardener the large style of the early Dudleys.

The great stone-chimney of the mansion-house

was the centre from which all the artificial features of the scene appeared to flow. The roofs, the gables, the dormer-windows, the porches, the clustered offices in the rear, all seemed to crowd about the great chimney. To this central pillar the paths all converged. The single poplar behind the house, — Nature is jealous of proud chimneys, and always loves to put a poplar near one, so that it may fling a leaf or two down its black throat every autumn, — the one tall poplar behind the house seemed to nod and whisper to the grave square column, the elms to sway their branches towards it. And when the blue smoke rose from its summit, it seemed to be wafted away to join the azure haze which hung around the peak in the far distance, so that both should bathe in a common atmosphere.

Behind the house were clumps of lilacs with a century's growth upon them, and looking more like trees than like shrubs. Shaded by a group of these was the ancient well, of huge circuit, and with a low arch opening out of its wall about ten feet below the surface, — whether the door of a crypt for the concealment of treasure, or of a subterranean passage, or merely of a vault for keeping provisions cool in hot weather, opinions differed.

On looking at the house, it was plain that it was built with Old-World notions of strength and durability, and, so far as might be, with Old-World materials. The hinges of the doors

stretched out like arms, instead of like hands, as we make them. The bolts were massive enough for a donjon-keep. The small window-panes were actually inclosed in the wood of the sashes, instead of being stuck to them with putty, as in our modern windows. The broad staircase was of easy ascent, and was guarded by quaintly turned and twisted balusters. The ceilings of the two rooms of state were moulded with medallion-portraits and rustic figures, such as may have been seen by many readers in the famous old Philipse house,—Washington's headquarters,—in the town of Yonkers. The fire-places, worthy of the wide-throated central chimney, were bordered by pictured tiles, some of them with Scripture stories, some with Watteau-like figures,—tall damsels in slim waists and with spread enough of skirt for a modern ballroom, with bowing, reclining, or musical swains of what everybody calls the "conventional" sort,—that is, the swain adapted to genteel society rather than to a literal sheep-compelling existence.

The house was furnished, soon after it was completed, with many heavy articles made in London from a rare wood just then come into fashion, not so rare now, and commonly known as mahogany. Time had turned it very dark, and the stately bedsteads and tall cabinets and claw-footed chairs and tables were in keeping with the sober dignity of the ancient mansion. The old "hangings" were yet preserved in the chambers,

faded, but still showing their rich patterns,—properly entitled to their name, for they were literally hung upon flat wooden frames like trellis-work, which again were secured to the naked partitions.

There were portraits of different date on the walls of the various apartments, old painted coats-of-arms, bevel-edged mirrors, and in one sleeping-room a glass case of wax-work flowers and spangly symbols, with a legend signifying that E. M. (supposed to be Elizabeth Mascarene) wished not to be “forgot”

“When I am dead and lay’d in dust
And all my bones are ”——

Poor E. M.! Poor everybody that sighs for earthly remembrance in a planet with a core of fire and a crust of fossils!

Such was the Dudley mansion-house,—for it kept its ancient name in spite of the change in the line of descent. Its spacious apartments looked dreary and desolate; for here Dudley Venner and his daughter dwelt by themselves, with such servants only as their quiet mode of life required. He almost lived in his library, the western room on the ground-floor. Its window looked upon a small plat of green, in the midst of which was a single grave marked by a plain marble slab. Except this room, and the chamber where he slept, and the servants’ wing, the rest of the house was all Elsie’s. She was always a restless, wandering

child from her early years, and would have her little bed moved from one chamber to another, — flitting round as the fancy took her. Sometimes she would drag a mat and a pillow into one of the great empty rooms, and, wrapping herself in a shawl, coil up and go to sleep in a corner. Nothing frightened her; the “haunted” chamber, with the torn hangings that flapped like wings when there was air stirring, was one of her favorite retreats.

She had been a very hard creature to manage. Her father could influence, but not govern her. Old Sophy, born of a slave mother in the house, could do more with her than anybody, knowing her by long instinctive study. The other servants were afraid of her. Her father had sent for governesses, but none of them ever stayed long. She made them nervous; one of them had a strange fit of sickness; not one of them ever came back to the house to see her. A young Spanish woman who taught her dancing succeeded best with her, for she had a passion for that exercise, and had mastered some of the most difficult dances.

Long before this period, she had manifested some most extraordinary singularities of taste or instinct. The extreme sensitiveness of her father on this point prevented any allusion to them; but there were stories floating round, some of them even getting into the papers, — without her name, of course, — which were of a kind to excite intense curiosity, if not more anxious feelings. This thing

was certain, that at the age of twelve she was missed one night, and was found sleeping in the open air under a tree, like a wild creature. Very often she would wander off by day, always without a companion, bringing home with her a nest, a flower, or even a more questionable trophy of her ramble, such as showed that there was no place where she was afraid to venture. Once in a while she had stayed out over night, in which case the alarm was spread, and men went in search of her, but never successfully,—so that some said she hid herself in trees, and others that she had found one of the old Tory caves.

Some, of course, said she was a crazy girl, and ought to be sent to an Asylum. But old Dr. Kittredge had shaken his head, and told them to bear with her, and let her have her way as much as they could, but watch her, as far as possible, without making her suspicious of them. He visited her now and then, under the pretext of seeing her father on business, or of only making a friendly call.

The Doctor fastened his horse outside the gate, and walked up the garden-alley. He stopped suddenly with a start. A strange sound had jarred upon his ear. It was a sharp prolonged rattle, continuous, but rising and falling as if in rhythmical cadence. He moved softly towards the open window from which the sound seemed to proceed.

Elsie was alone in the room, dancing one of those wild Moorish fandangos, such as a *matador* hot from the *Plaza de Toros* of Seville or Madrid might love to lie and gaze at. She was a figure to look upon in silence. The dancing frenzy must have seized upon her while she was dressing; for she was in her bodice, bare-armed, her hair floating unbound far below the waist of her barred or banded skirt. She had caught up her castanets, and rattled them as she danced with a kind of passionate fierceness, her lithe body undulating with flexuous grace, her diamond eyes glittering, her round arms wreathing and unwinding, alive and vibrant to the tips of the slender fingers. Some passion seemed to exhaust itself in this dancing paroxysm; for all at once she reeled from the middle of the floor, and flung herself, as it were in a careless coil, upon a great tiger's-skin which was spread out in one corner of the apartment.

The old Doctor stood motionless, looking at her as she lay panting on the tawny, black-lined robe of the dead monster, which stretched out beneath her, its rude flattened outline recalling the Terror of the Jungle as he crouched for his fatal spring. In a few moments her head drooped upon her arm, and her glittering eyes closed,—she was sleeping. He stood looking at her still, steadily, thoughtfully, tenderly. Presently he lifted his hand to his forehead, as if recalling some fading remembrance of other years.

“ Poor Catalina ! ”

This was all he said. He shook his head,—
implying that his visit would be in vain to-day,
—returned to his sulky, and rode away, as if in
a dream.

CHAPTER XI.

COUSIN RICHARD'S VISIT.

THE Doctor was roused from his reverie by the clatter of approaching hoofs. He looked forward and saw a young fellow galloping rapidly towards him.

A common New-England rider with his toes turned out, his elbows jerking and the daylight showing under him at every step, bestriding a cantering beast of the plebeian breed, thick at every point where he should be thin, and thin at every point where he should be thick, is not one of those noble objects that bewitch the world. The best horsemen outside of the cities are the unshod country-boys, who ride "bare-back," with only a halter round the horse's neck, digging their brown heels into his ribs, and slanting over backwards, but sticking on like leeches, and taking the hardest trot as if they loved it. This was a different sight on which the Doctor was looking. The streaming mane and tail of the unshorn, savage-looking, black horse, the dashing grace with which the young fellow in the shadowy *sombrero*, and armed with the huge spurs, sat in his

high-peaked saddle, could belong only to the mustang of the Pampas and his master. This bold rider was a young man whose sudden apparition in the quiet inland town had reminded some of the good people of a bright, curly-haired boy they had known some eight or ten years before as little Dick Venner.

This boy had passed several of his early years at the Dudley mansion, the playmate of Elsie, being her cousin, two or three years older than herself, the son of Captain Richard Venner, a South American trader, who, as he changed his residence often, was glad to leave the boy in his brother's charge. The Captain's wife, this boy's mother, was a lady of Buenos Ayres, of Spanish descent, and had died while the child was in his cradle. These two motherless children were as strange a pair as one roof could well cover. Both handsome, wild, impetuous, unmanageable, they played and fought together like two young leopards, beautiful, but dangerous, their lawless instincts showing through all their graceful movements.

The boy was little else than a young *Gaucha* when he first came to Rockland; for he had learned to ride almost as soon as to walk, and could jump on his pony and trip up a runaway pig with the *bolos* or noose him with his miniature *lasso* at an age when some city-children would hardly be trusted out of sight of a nursery-maid. It makes men imperious to sit a horse;

no man governs his fellows so well as from this living throne. And so, from Marcus Aurelius in Roman bronze, down to the "man on horseback" in General Cushing's prophetic speech, the saddle has always been the true seat of empire. The absolute tyranny of the human will over a noble and powerful beast develops the instinct of personal prevalence and dominion; so that horse-subduer and hero were almost synonymous in simpler times, and are closely related still. An ancestry of wild riders naturally enough bequeaths also those other tendencies which we see in the Tartars, the Cossacks, and our own Indian Centaurs, — and as well, perhaps, in the old-fashioned fox-hunting squire as in any of these. Sharp alternations of violent action and self-indulgent repose; a hard run, and a long revel after it: this is what over-much horse tends to animalize a man into. Such antecedents may have helped to make little Dick Venner a self-willed, capricious boy, and a rough playmate for Elsie.

Elsie was the wilder of the two. Old Sophy, who used to watch them with those quick, animal-looking eyes of hers, — she was said to be the granddaughter of a cannibal chief, and inherited the keen senses belonging to all creatures which are hunted as game, — Old Sophy, who watched them in their play and their quarrels, always seemed to be more afraid for the boy than the girl. "Massa Dick! Massa Dick! don' you

be too rough wi' dat gal! She scratch you las' week, 'n' some day she bite you; 'n' if she bite you, Massa Dick!" Old Sophy nodded her head ominously, as if she could say a great deal more; while, in grateful acknowledgment of her caution, Master Dick put his two little fingers in the angles of his mouth, and his forefingers on his lower eyelids, drawing upon these features until his expression reminded her of something she vaguely recollected in her infancy, — the face of a favorite deity executed in wood by an African artist for her grandfather, brought over by her mother, and burned when she became a Christian.

These two wild children had much in common. They loved to ramble together, to build huts, to climb trees for nests, to ride the colts, to dance, to race, and to play at boys' rude games as if both were boys. But wherever two natures have a great deal in common, the conditions of a first-rate quarrel are furnished ready-made. Relations are very apt to hate each other just because they are too much alike. It is so frightful to be in an atmosphere of family idiosyncrasies; to see all the hereditary uncomeliness or infirmity of body, all the defects of speech, all the failings of temper, intensified by concentration, so that every fault of our own finds itself multiplied by reflections, like our images in a saloon lined with mirrors! Nature knows what she is about. The centrifugal principle which grows out of the antipathy of like to like is only the repetition in character of the

arrangement we see expressed materially in certain seed-capsules, which burst and throw the seed to all points of the compass. A house is a large pod with a human germ or two in each of its cells or chambers; it opens by dehiscence of the front-door by-and-by, and projects one of its germs to Kansas, another to San Francisco, another to Chicago, and so on; and this that Smith may not be Smithed to death and Brown may not be Browned into a mad-house, but mix in with the world again and struggle back to average humanity.

Elsie's father, whose fault was to indulge her in everything, found that it would never do to let these children grow up together. They would either love each other as they got older, and pair like wild creatures, or take some fierce antipathy, which might end nobody could tell where. It was not safe to try. The boy must be sent away. A sharper quarrel than common decided this point. Master Dick forgot Old Sophy's caution, and vexed the girl into a paroxysm of wrath, in which she sprang at him and bit his arm. Perhaps they made too much of it; for they sent for the old Doctor, who came at once when he heard what had happened. He had a good deal to say about the danger there was from the teeth of animals or human beings when enraged; and as he emphasized his remarks by the application of a pencil of lunar caustic to each of the marks left by the sharp white teeth, they were like to be remembered by at least one of his hearers.

So Master Dick went off on his travels, which led him into strange places and stranger company. Elsie was half pleased and half sorry to have him go; the children had a kind of mingled liking and hate for each other, just such as is very common among relations. Whether the girl had most satisfaction in the plays they shared, or in teasing him, or taking her small revenge upon him for teasing her, it would have been hard to say. At any rate, she was lonely without him. She had more fondness for the old black woman than anybody; but Sophy could not follow her far beyond her own old rocking-chair. As for her father, she had made him afraid of her, not for his sake, but for her own. Sometimes she would seem to be fond of him, and the parent's heart would yearn within him as she twined her supple arms about him; and then some look she gave him, some half-articulated expression, would turn his cheek pale and almost make him shiver, and he would say kindly, "Now go, Elsie, dear," and smile upon her as she went, and close and lock the door softly after her. Then his forehead would knot and furrow itself, and the drops of anguish stand thick upon it. He would go to the western window of his study and look at the solitary mound with the marble slab for its head-stone. After his grief had had its way, he would kneel down and pray for his child as one who has no hope save in that special grace which can bring the most rebellious spirit into sweet subjection. All this might seem

like weakness in a parent having the charge of one sole daughter of his house and heart; but he had tried authority and tenderness by turns so long without any good effect, that he had become sore perplexed, and, surrounding her with cautious watchfulness as he best might, left her in the main to her own guidance and the merciful influences which Heaven might send down to direct her footsteps.

Meantime the boy grew up to youth and early manhood through a strange succession of adventures. He had been at school at Buenos Ayres, — had quarrelled with his mother's relatives, — had run off to the Pampas, and lived with the *Gauchos*, — had made friends with the Indians, and ridden with them, it was rumored, in some of their savage forays, — had returned and made up his quarrel, — had got money by inheritance or otherwise, — had troubled the peace of certain magistrates, — had found it convenient to leave the City of Wholesome Breezes for a time, and had galloped off on a fast horse of his, (so it was said), with some officers riding after him, who took good care (but this was only the popular story) not to catch him. A few days after this he was taking his ice on the Alameda of Mendoza, and a week or two later sailed from Valparaiso for New York, carrying with him the horse with which he had scampered over the Plains, a trunk or two with his newly purchased outfit of clothing and other conveniences, and

a belt heavy with gold and with a few Brazilian diamonds sewed in it, enough in value to serve him for a long journey.

Dick Venner had seen life enough to wear out the earlier sensibilities of adolescence. He was tired of worshipping or tyrannizing over the bistred or umbered beauties of mingled blood among whom he had been living. Even that piquant exhibition which the Rio de Mendoza presents to the amateur of breathing sculpture failed to interest him. He was thinking of a far-off village on the other side of the equator, and of the wild girl with whom he used to play and quarrel, a creature of a different race from these degenerate mongrels.

"A game little devil she was, sure enough!" — and as Dick spoke, he bared his wrist to look for the marks she had left on it: two small white scars, where the two small sharp upper teeth had struck when she flashed at him with her eyes sparkling as bright as those glittering stones sewed up in the belt he wore. — "That's a filly worth noosing!" said Dick to himself, as he looked in admiration at the sign of her spirit and passion. "I wonder if she will bite at eighteen as she did at eight! She shall have a chance to try, at any rate!"

Such was the self-sacrificing disposition with which Richard Venner, Esq., a passenger by the Condor from Valparaiso, set foot upon his native shore, and turned his face in the direction of

Rockland, The Mountain and the mansion-house. He had heard something, from time to time, of his New-England relatives, and knew that they were living together as he left them. And so he heralded himself to "My dear Uncle" by a letter signed "Your loving nephew, Richard Venner," in which letter he told a very frank story of travel and mercantile adventure, expressed much gratitude for the excellent counsel and example which had helped to form his character and preserve him in the midst of temptation, inquired affectionately after his uncle's health, was much interested to know whether his lively cousin who used to be his playmate had grown up as handsome as she promised to be, and announced his intention of paying his respects to them both at Rockland. Not long after this came the trunks marked R. V. which he had sent before him, forerunners of his advent: he was not going to wait for a reply or an invitation.

What a sound that is,—the banging down of the preliminary trunk, without its claimant to give it the life which is borrowed by all personal appendages, so long as the owner's hand or eye is on them! If it announce the coming of one loved and longed for, how we delight to look at it, to sit down on it, to caress it in our fancies, as a lone exile walking out on a windy pier yearns towards the merchantman lying alongside, with the colors of his own native land at her

peak, and the name of the port he sailed from long ago upon her stern! But if it tell the near approach of the undesired, inevitable guest, what sound short of the muffled noises made by the undertakers as they turn the corners in the dim-lighted house, with low shuffle of feet and whispered cautions, carries such a sense of knocking-kneed collapse with it as the thumping down in the front entry of the heavy portmanteau, rammed with the changes of uncounted coming weeks?

Whether the R. V. portmanteaus brought one or the other of these emotions to the tenants of the Dudley mansion, it might not be easy to settle. Elsie professed to be pleased with the thought of having an adventurous young stranger, with stories to tell, an inmate of their quiet, not to say dull, family. Under almost any other circumstances, her father would have been unwilling to take a young fellow of whom he knew so little under his roof; but this was his nephew, and anything that seemed like to amuse or please Elsie was agreeable to him. He had grown almost desperate, and felt as if any change in the current of her life and feelings might save her from some strange paroxysm of dangerous mental exaltation or sullen perversion of disposition, from which some fearful calamity might come to herself or others.

Dick had been several weeks at the Dudley mansion. A few days before, he had made a

sudden dash for the nearest large city, — and when the Doctor met him, he was just returning from his visit.

It had been a curious meeting between the two young persons, who had parted so young and after such strange relations with each other. When Dick first presented himself at the mansion, not one in the house would have known him for the boy who had left them all so suddenly years ago. He was so dark, partly from his descent, partly from long habits of exposure, that Elsie looked almost fair beside him. He had something of the family beauty which belonged to his cousin, but his eye had a fierce passion in it, very unlike the cold glitter of Elsie's. Like many people of strong and imperious temper, he was soft-voiced and very gentle in his address, when he had no special reason for being otherwise. He soon found reasons enough to be as amiable as he could force himself to be with his uncle and his cousin. Elsie was to his fancy. She had a strange attraction for him, quite unlike anything he had ever known in other women. There was something, too, in early associations: when those who parted as children meet as man and woman, there is always a renewal of that early experience which followed the taste of the forbidden fruit, — a natural blush of consciousness, not without its charm.

Nothing could be more becoming than the behavior of "Richard Venner, Esquire, the guest of Dudley Venner, Esquire, at his noble mansion," as he was announced in the Court column of the "Rockland Weekly Universe." He was pleased to find himself treated with kindness and attention as a relative. He made himself very agreeable by abundant details concerning the religious, political, social, commercial, and educational progress of the South American cities and states. He was himself much interested in everything that was going on about the Dudley mansion, walked all over it, noticed its valuable wood-lots with special approbation, was delighted with the grand old house and its furniture, and would not be easy until he had seen all the family silver and heard its history. In return, he had much to tell of his father, now dead, — the only one of the Venners, beside themselves, in whose fate his uncle was interested. With Elsie, he was subdued and almost tender in his manner; with the few visitors whom they saw, shy and silent, — perhaps a little watchful, if any young man happened to be among them.

Young fellows placed on their good behavior are apt to get restless and nervous, all ready to fly off into some mischief or other. Dick Venner had his half-tamed horse with him to work off his suppressed life with. When the savage passion of his young blood came over him, he would fetch out the mustang, screaming

and kicking as these amiable beasts are wont to do, strap the Spanish saddle tight to his back, vault into it, and, after getting away from the village, strike the long spurs into his sides and whirl away in a wild gallop, until the black horse was flecked with white foam, and the cruel steel points were red with his blood. When horse and rider were alike tired, he would fling the bridle on his neck and saunter homeward, always contriving to get to the stable in a quiet way, and coming into the house as calm as a bishop after a sober trot on his steady-going cob.

After a few weeks of this kind of life, he began to want some more fierce excitement. He had tried making downright love to Elsie, with no great success as yet, in his own opinion. The girl was capricious in her treatment of him, sometimes scowling and repellent, sometimes familiar, very often, as she used to be of old, teasing and malicious. All this, perhaps, made her more interesting to a young man who was tired of easy conquests. There was a strange fascination in her eyes, too, which at times was quite irresistible, so that he would feel himself drawn to her by a power which seemed to take away his will for the moment. It may have been nothing but the common charm of bright eyes; but he had never before experienced the same kind of attraction.

Perhaps she was not so very different from

what she had been as a child, after all. At any rate, so it seemed to Dick Venner, who, as was said before, had tried making love to her. They were sitting alone in the study one day; Elsie had round her neck that somewhat peculiar ornament, the golden *torque*, which she had worn to the great party. Youth is adventurous and very curious about necklaces, brooches, chains, and other such adornments, so long as they are worn by young persons of the female sex. Dick was seized with a great passion for examining this curious chain, and, after some preliminary questions, was rash enough to lean towards her and put out his hand toward the neck that lay in the golden coil. She threw her head back, her eyes narrowing and her forehead drawing down so that Dick thought her head actually flattened itself. He started involuntarily; for she looked so like the little girl who had struck him with those sharp flashing teeth, that the whole scene came back, and he felt the stroke again as if it had just been given, and the two white scars began to sting as they did after the old Doctor had burned them with that stick of gray caustic, which looked so like a slate pencil, and felt so much like the end of a red-hot poker.

It took something more than a gallop to set him right after this. The next day he mentioned having received a letter from a mercantile agent with whom he had dealings. What his business was is, perhaps, none of our business. At

any rate, it required him to go at once to the city where his correspondent resided.

Independently of this "business" which called him, there may have been other motives, such as have been hinted at. People who have been living for a long time in dreary country-places, without any emotion beyond such as are occasioned by a trivial pleasure or annoyance, often get crazy at last for a vital paroxysm of some kind or other. In this state they rush to the great cities for a plunge into their turbid life-baths, with a frantic thirst for every exciting pleasure, which makes them the willing and easy victims of all those who sell the Devil's wares on commission. The less intelligent and instructed class of unfortunates, who venture with their ignorance and their instincts into what is sometimes called the "life" of great cities, are put through a rapid course of instruction which entitles them very commonly to a diploma from the police court. But they only illustrate the working of the same tendency in mankind at large which has been occasionally noticed in the sons of ministers and other eminently worthy people, by many ascribed to that intense congenital hatred for goodness which distinguishes human nature from that of the brute, but perhaps as readily accounted for by considering it as the yawning and stretching of a young soul cramped too long in one moral posture.

Richard Venner was a young man of remark-

able experience for his years. He ran less risk, therefore, in exposing himself to the temptations and dangers of a great city than many older men, who, seeking the livelier scenes of excitement to be found in large towns as a relaxation after the monotonous routine of family-life, are too often taken advantage of and made the victims of their sentiments or their generous confidence in their fellow-creatures. Such was not his destiny. There was something about him which looked as if he would not take bullying kindly. He had also the advantage of being acquainted with most of those ingenious devices by which the proverbial inconstancy of fortune is steadied to something more nearly approaching fixed laws, and the dangerous risks which have so often led young men to ruin and suicide are practically reduced to somewhat less than nothing. So that Mr. Richard Venner worked off his nervous energies without any troublesome adventure, and was ready to return to Rockland in less than a week, without having lightened the money-belt he wore round his body, or tarnished the long glittering knife he carried in his boot.

Dick had sent his trunk to the nearest town through which the railroad leading to the city passed. He rode off on his black horse and left him at the place where he took the cars. On arriving at the city station, he took a coach and drove to one of the great hotels. Thither drove also a sagacious-looking, middle-aged man, who

entered his name as "W. Thompson" in the book, at the office immediately after that of "R. Venner." Mr. "Thompson" kept a carelessly observant eye upon Mr. Venner during his stay at the hotel, and followed him to the cars when he left, looking over his shoulder when he bought his ticket at the station, and seeing him fairly off without obtruding himself in any offensive way upon his attention. Mr. Thompson, known in other quarters as Detective Policeman Terry, got very little by his trouble. Richard Venner did not turn out to be the wife-poisoner, the defaulting cashier, the river-pirate, or the great counterfeiter. He paid his hotel-bill as a gentleman should always do, if he has the money, and can spare it. The detective had probably overrated his own sagacity when he ventured to suspect Mr. Venner. He reported to his chief that there was a knowing-looking fellow he had been round after, but he rather guessed he was nothing more than "one o' them Southern sportsmen."

The poor fellows at the stable where Dick had left his horse had had trouble enough with him. One of the ostlers was limping about with a lame leg, and another had lost a mouthful of his coat, which came very near carrying a piece of his shoulder with it. When Mr. Venner came back for his beast, he was as wild as if he had just been lassoed, screaming, kicking, rolling over to get rid of his saddle,—and when his

rider was at last mounted, jumping about in a way to dislodge any common horseman. To all this Dick replied by sticking his long spurs deeper and deeper into his flanks, until the creature found he was mastered, and dashed off as if all the thistles of the Pampas were pricking him.

“One more gallop, Juan!” This was in the last mile of the road before he came to the town which brought him in sight of the mansion-house. It was in this last gallop that the fiery mustang and his rider flashed by the old Doctor. Cassia pointed her sharp ears and shied to let them pass. The Doctor turned and looked through the little round glass in the back of his sulky.

“Dick Turpin, there, will find more than his match!” said the Doctor.

CHAPTER XII.

THE APOLLINEAN INSTITUTE.

(With Extracts from the "Report of the Committee.")

THE readers of this narrative will hardly expect any elaborate details of the educational management of the Apollinean Institute. They cannot be supposed to take the same interest in its affairs as was shown by the Annual Committees who reported upon its condition and prospects. As these Committees were, however, an important part of the mechanism of the establishment, some general account of their organization and a few extracts from the Report of the one last appointed may not be out of place.

Whether Mr. Silas Peckham had some contrivance for packing his Committees, whether they happened always to be made up of optimists by nature, whether they were cajoled into good-humor by polite attentions, or whether they were always really delighted with the wonderful acquirements of the pupils and the admirable order of the school, it is certain that their Annual Re-

ports were couched in language which might warm the heart of the most cold-blooded and calculating father that ever had a family of daughters to educate. In fact, these Annual Reports were considered by Mr. Peckham as his most effective advertisements.

The first thing, therefore, was to see that the Committee was made up of persons known to the public. Some worn-out politician, in that leisurely and amiable transition-state which comes between official extinction and the paralysis which will finish him as soon as his brain gets a little softer, made an admirable Chairman for Mr. Peckham, when he had the luck to pick up such an article. Old reputations, like old fashions, are more prized in the grassy than in the stony districts. An effete celebrity, who would never be heard of again in the great places until the funeral sermon waked up his memory for one parting spasm, finds himself in full flavor of renown a little farther back from the changing winds of the sea-coast. If such a public character was not to be had, so that there was no chance of heading the Report with the name of the Honorable Mr. Somebody, the next best thing was to get the Reverend Dr. Somebody to take that conspicuous position. Then would follow two or three local worthies with Esquire after their names. If any stray literary personage from one of the great cities happened to be within reach, he was pounced upon by Mr. Silas Peckham. It was a

hard case for the poor man, who had travelled a hundred miles or two to the outside suburbs after peace and unwatered milk, to be pumped for a speech in this unexpected way. It was harder still, if he had been induced to venture a few tremulous remarks, to be obliged to write them out for the "Rockland Weekly Universe," with the chance of seeing them used as an advertising certificate as long as he lived, if he lived as long as the late Dr. Waterhouse did after giving his certificate in favor of Whitwell's celebrated Cephalic Snuff.

The Report of the last Committee had been signed by the Honorable ———, late ——— of ———, as Chairman. (It is with reluctance that the name and titles are left in blank; but our public characters are so familiarly known to the whole community that this reserve becomes necessary.) The other members of the Committee were the Reverend Mr. Butters, of a neighboring town, who was to make the prayer before the Exercises of the Exhibition, and two or three notabilities of Rockland, with geoponic eyes, and glabrous, bumpless foreheads. A few extracts from the Report are subjoined:—

"The Committee have great pleasure in recording their unanimous opinion, that the Institution was never in so flourishing a condition. . . .

"The health of the pupils is excellent; the admirable quality of food supplied shows itself in

their appearance ; their blooming aspect excited the admiration of the Committee, and bears testimony to the assiduity of the excellent Matron.

" moral and religious condition most encouraging, which they cannot but attribute to the personal efforts and instruction of the faithful Principal, who considers religious instruction a solemn duty which he cannot commit to other people.

" great progress in their studies, under the intelligent superintendence of the accomplished Principal, assisted by Mr. Badger, [Mr. Langdon's predecessor,] Miss Darley, the lady who superintends the English branches, Miss Crabs, her assistant and teacher of Modern Languages, and Mr. Schneider, teacher of French, German, Latin, and Music.

" Education is the great business of the Institute. Amusements are objects of a secondary nature ; but these are by no means neglected. . . .

" English compositions of great originality and beauty, creditable alike to the head and heart of their accomplished authors. several poems of a very high order of merit, which would do honor to the literature of any age or country. life-like drawings, showing great proficiency. . . . Many converse fluently in various modern languages. perform the most difficult airs with the skill of professional musicians.

" advantages unsurpassed, if equalled,

by those of any Institution in the country, and reflecting the highest honor on the distinguished Head of the Establishment, SILAS PECKHAM, Esquire, and his admirable Lady, the MATRON, with their worthy assistants. . . ."

The perusal of this Report did Mr. Bernard more good than a week's vacation would have done. It gave him such a laugh as he had not had for a month. The way in which Silas Peckham had made his Committee say what he wanted them to — for he recognized a number of expressions in the Report as coming directly from the lips of his principal, and could not help thinking how cleverly he had *forced* his phrases, as jugglers do the particular card they wish their dupe to take — struck him as particularly neat and pleasing.

He had passed through the sympathetic and emotional stages in his new experience, and had arrived at the philosophical and practical state, which takes things coolly, and goes to work to set them right. He had breadth enough of view to see that there was nothing so very exceptional in this educational trader's dealings with his subordinates, but he had also manly feeling enough to attack the particular individual instance of wrong before him. There are plenty of dealers in morals, as in ordinary traffic, who confine themselves to wholesale business. They leave the small necessity of their next-door neigh-

bor to the retailers, who are poorer in statistics and general facts, but richer in the every-day charities. Mr. Bernard felt, at first, as one does who sees a gray rat steal out of a drain and begin gnawing at the bark of some tree loaded with fruit or blossoms, which he will soon girdle, if he is let alone. The first impulse is to murder him with the nearest ragged stone. Then one remembers that he is a rodent, acting after the law of his kind, and cools down and is contented to drive him off and guard the tree against his teeth for the future. As soon as this is done, one can watch his attempts at mischief with a certain amusement.

This was the kind of process Mr. Bernard had gone through. First, the indignant surprise of a generous nature, when it comes unexpectedly into relations with a mean one. Then the impulse of extermination, — a divine instinct, intended to keep down vermin of all classes to their working averages in the economy of Nature. Then a return of cheerful tolerance, — a feeling, that, if the Deity could bear with rats and sharpers, he could; with a confident trust, that, in the long run, terriers and honest men would have the upperhand, and a grateful consciousness that he had been sent just at the right time to come between a patient victim and the master who held her in peonage.

Having once made up his mind what to do, Mr. Bernard was as good-natured and hopeful as

ever. He had the great advantage, from his professional training, of knowing how to recognize and deal with the nervous disturbances to which overtasked women are so liable. He saw well enough that Helen Darley would certainly kill herself or lose her wits, if he could not lighten her labors and lift off a large part of her weight of cares. The worst of it was, that she was one of those women who naturally overwork themselves, like those horses who will go at the top of their pace until they drop. Such women are dreadfully unmanageable. It is as hard reasoning with them as it would have been reasoning with Io, when she was flying over land and sea, driven by the sting of the never-sleeping gadfly.

This was a delicate, interesting game that he played. Under one innocent pretext or another, he invaded this or that special province she had made her own. He would collect the themes and have them all read and marked, answer all the puzzling questions in mathematics, make the other teachers come to him for directions, and in this way gradually took upon himself not only all the general superintendence that belonged to his office, but stole away so many of the special duties which might fairly have belonged to his assistant, that, before she knew it, she was looking better and feeling more cheerful than for many and many a month before.

When the nervous energy is depressed by any bodily cause, or exhausted by overworking, there

follow effects which have often been misinterpreted by moralists, and especially by theologians. The conscience itself becomes neuralgic, sometimes actually inflamed, so that the least touch is agony. Of all liars and false accusers, a sick conscience is the most inventive and indefatigable. The devoted daughter, wife, mother, whose life has been given to unselfish labors, who has filled a place which it seems to others only an angel would make good, reproaches herself with incompetence and neglect of duty. The humble Christian, who has been a model to others, calls himself a worm of the dust on one page of his diary, and arraigns himself on the next for coming short of the perfection of an archangel.

Conscience itself requires a conscience, or nothing can be more unscrupulous. It told Saul that he did well in persecuting the Christians. It has goaded countless multitudes of various creeds to endless forms of self-torture. The cities of India are full of cripples it has made. The hill-sides of Syria are riddled with holes, where miserable hermits, whose lives it had palsied, lived and died like the vermin they harbored. Our libraries are crammed with books written by spiritual hypochondriacs, who inspected all their moral secretions a dozen times a day. They are full of interest, but they should be transferred from the shelf of the theologian to that of the medical man who makes a study of insanity.

This was the state into which too much work

and too much responsibility were bringing Helen Darley, when the new master came and lifted so much of the burden that was crushing her as must be removed before she could have a chance to recover her natural elasticity and buoyancy. Many of the noblest women, suffering like her, but less fortunate in being relieved at the right moment, die worried out of life by the perpetual teasing of this inflamed, neuralgic conscience. So subtile is the line which separates the true and almost angelic sensibility of a healthy, but exalted nature, from the soreness of a soul which is sympathizing with a morbid state of the body, that it is no wonder they are often confounded. And thus many good women are suffered to perish by that form of spontaneous combustion in which the victim goes on toiling day and night with the hidden fire consuming her, until all at once her cheek whitens, and, as we look upon her, she drops away, a heap of ashes. The more they overwork themselves, the more exacting becomes the sense of duty, — as the draught of the locomotive's furnace blows stronger and makes the fire burn more fiercely, the faster it spins along the track.

It is not very likely, as was said at the beginning of this chapter, that we shall trouble ourselves a great deal about the internal affairs of the Apollinean Institute. These schools are, in the nature of things, not so very unlike each other as to require a minute description for each partic-

ular one among them. They have all very much the same general features, pleasing and displeasing. All feeding-establishments have something odious about them, — from the wretched country-houses where paupers are farmed out to the lowest bidder, up to the commons-tables at colleges, and even the fashionable boarding-house. A person's appetite should be at war with no other purse than his own. Young people, especially, who have a bone-factory at work in them, and have to feed the living looms of innumerable growing tissues, should be provided for, if possible, by those who love them like their own flesh and blood. Elsewhere their appetites will be sure to make them enemies, or, what are almost as bad, friends whose interests are at variance with the claims of their exacting necessities and demands.

Besides, all commercial transactions in regard to the most sacred interests of life are hateful even to those who profit by them. The clergyman, the physician, the teacher, must be paid; but each of them, if his duty be performed in the true spirit, can hardly help a shiver of disgust when money is counted out to him for administering the consolations of religion, for saving some precious life, for sowing the seeds of Christian civilization in young, ingenuous souls.

And yet all these schools, with their provincial French and their mechanical accomplishments, with their cheap parade of diplomas and com-

mencements and other public honors, have an ever fresh interest to all who see the task they are performing in our new social order. These girls are not being educated for governesses, or to be exported, with other manufactured articles, to colonies where there happens to be a surplus of males. Most of them will be wives, and every American-born husband is a possible President of these United States. Any one of these girls may be a four-years' queen. There is no sphere of human activity so exalted that she may not be called upon to fill it.

But there is another consideration of far higher interest. The education of our community to all that is beautiful is flowing in mainly through its women, and that to a considerable extent by the aid of these large establishments, the least perfect of which do something to stimulate the higher tastes and partially instruct them. Sometimes there is, perhaps, reason to fear that girls will be too highly educated for their own happiness, if they are lifted by their culture out of the range of the practical and every-day working youth by whom they are surrounded. But this is a risk we must take. Our young men come into active life so early, that, if our girls were not educated to something beyond mere practical duties, our material prosperity would outstrip our culture; as it often does in large places where money is made too rapidly. This is the meaning, therefore, of that somewhat ambitious programme common

to most of these large institutions, at which we sometimes smile, perhaps unwisely or uncharitably.

We shall take it for granted that the routine of instruction went on at the Apollinean Institute much as it does in other schools of the same class. People, young or old, are wonderfully different, if we contrast extremes in pairs. They approach much nearer, if we take them in groups of twenty. Take two separate hundreds as they come, without choosing, and you get the gamut of human character in both so completely that you can strike many chords in each which shall be in perfect unison with corresponding ones in the other. If we go a step farther, and compare the population of two villages of the same race and region, there is such a regularly graduated distribution and parallelism of character, that it seems as if Nature must turn out human beings in sets like chessmen.

It must be confessed that the position in which Mr. Bernard now found himself had a pleasing danger about it which might well justify all the fears entertained on his account by more experienced friends, when they learned that he was engaged in a Young Ladies' Seminary. The school never went on more smoothly than during the first period of his administration, after he had arranged its duties, and taken his share, and even more than his share, upon himself. But human nature does not wait for the diploma of the Apol-

linean Institute to claim the exercise of its instincts and faculties. These young girls saw but little of the youth of the neighborhood. The mansion-house young men were off at college or in the cities, or making love to each other's sisters, or at any rate unavailable for some reason or other. There were a few "clerks," — that is, young men who attended shops, commonly called "stores," — who were fond of walking by the Institute, when they were off duty, for the sake of exchanging a word or a glance with any one of the young ladies they might happen to know, if any such were stirring abroad: crude young men, mostly, with a great many "Sirs" and "Ma'ams" in their speech, and with that style of address sometimes acquired in the retail business, as if the salesman were recommending himself to a customer, — "First-rate family article, Ma'am; warranted to wear a lifetime; just one yard and three quarters in this pattern, Ma'am; sha'n't I have the pleasure?" and so forth. If there had been ever so many of them, and if they had been ever so fascinating, the quarantine of the Institute was too rigorous to allow any romantic infection to be introduced from without.

Anybody might see what would happen, with a good-looking, well-dressed, well-bred young man, who had the authority of a master, it is true, but the manners of a friend and equal, moving about among these young girls day after day, his eyes meeting theirs, his breath mingling with

theirs, his voice growing familiar to them, never in any harsh tones, often soothing, encouraging, always sympathetic, with its male depth and breadth of sound among the chorus of trebles, as if it were a river in which a hundred of these little piping streamlets might lose themselves; anybody might see what would happen. Young girls wrote home to their parents that they enjoyed themselves much, this term, at the Institute, and thought they were making rapid progress in their studies. There was a great enthusiasm for the young master's reading-classes in English poetry. Some of the poor little things began to adorn themselves with an extra ribbon, or a bit of such jewelry as they had before kept for great occasions. Dear souls! they only half knew what they were doing it for. Does the bird know why its feathers grow more brilliant and its voice becomes musical in the pairing season?

And so, in the midst of this quiet inland town, where a mere accident had placed Mr. Bernard Langdon, there was a concentration of explosive materials which might at any time change its Arcadian and academic repose into a scene of dangerous commotion. What said Helen Darley, when she saw with her woman's glance that more than one girl, when she should be looking at her book, was looking over it toward the master's desk? Was her own heart warmed by any livelier feeling than gratitude, as its life began to flow with fuller pulses, and the morning sky

again looked bright and the flowers recovered their lost fragrance? Was there any strange, mysterious affinity between the master and the dark girl who sat by herself? Could she call him at will by looking at him? Could it be that — ? It made her shiver to think of it. — And who was that strange horseman who passed Mr. Bernard at dusk the other evening, looking so like Mephistopheles galloping hard to be in season at the witches' Sabbath-gathering? That must be the cousin of Elsie's who wants to marry her, they say. A dangerous-looking fellow for a rival, if one took a fancy to the dark girl! And who is she, and what? — by what demon is she haunted, by what taint is she blighted, by what curse is she followed, by what destiny is she marked, that her strange beauty has such a terror in it, and that hardly one shall dare to love her, and her eye glitters always, but warms for none?

Some of these questions are ours. Some were Helen Darley's. Some of them mingled with the dreams of Bernard Langdon, as he slept the night after meeting the strange horseman. In the morning he happened to be a little late in entering the school-room. There was something between the leaves of the Virgil which lay upon his desk. He opened it and saw a freshly gathered mountain-flower. He looked at Elsie, instinctively, involuntarily. She had another such flower on her breast.

A young girl's graceful compliment, — that is

all, — no doubt, — no doubt. It was odd that the flower should have happened to be laid between the leaves of the Fourth Book of the “Æneid,” and at this line, —

“Incipit effari, mediâque in voce resistit.”

A remembrance of an ancient superstition flashed through the master’s mind, and he determined to try the *Sortes Virgilianæ*. He shut the volume, and opened it again at a venture. — The story of Laocoön!

He read, with a strange feeling of unwilling fascination, from “*Horresco referens*” to “*Bis medium amplexi*,” and flung the book from him, as if its leaves had been steeped in the subtle poisons that princes die of.

CHAPTER XIII.

CURIOSITY.

PEOPLE will talk. *Ciascun lo dice* is a tune that is played oftener than the national air of this country or any other.

"That's what they say. Means to marry her, if she *is* his cousin. Got money himself,—that's the story,—but wants to come and live in the old place, and get the Dudley property by-and-by."—"Mother's folks was wealthy."—"Twenty-three to twenty-five year old."—"He a'n't more'n twenty, or twenty-one at the outside."—"Looks as if he knew too much to be only twenty year old."—"Guess he's been through the mill,—don't look so green, anyhow,—hey? Did y' ever mind that cut over his left eyebrow?"

So they gossipped in Rockland. The young fellows could make nothing of Dick Venner. He was shy and proud with the few who made advances to him. The young ladies called him handsome and romantic, but he looked at them like a many-tailed pacha who was in the habit of ordering his wives by the dozen.

"What do you think of the young man over there at the Venners'?" said Miss Arabella Thornton to her father.

"Handsome," said the Judge, "but dangerous-looking. His face is indictable at common law. Do you know, my dear, I think there is a blank at the Sheriff's office, with a place for his name in it?"

The Judge paused and looked grave, as if he had just listened to the verdict of the jury and was going to pronounce sentence.

"Have you heard anything against him?" said the Judge's daughter.

"Nothing. But I don't like these mixed bloods and half-told stories. Besides, I have seen a good many desperate fellows at the bar, and I have a fancy they all have a look belonging to them. The worst one I ever sentenced looked a good deal like this fellow. A wicked mouth. All our other features are made for us; but a man makes his own mouth."

"Who was the person you sentenced?"

"He was a young fellow that undertook to garrote a man who had won his money at cards. The same slender shape, the same cunning, fierce look, smoothed over with a plausible air. Depend upon it, there is an expression in all the sort of people who live by their wits when they can, and by worse weapons when their wits fail them, that we old law-doctors know just as well as the medical counsellors

know the marks of disease in a man's face. Dr. Kittredge looks at a man and says he is going to die; I look at another man and say he is going to be hanged, if nothing happens. I don't say so of this one, but I don't like his looks. I wonder Dudley Venner takes to him so kindly."

"It's all for Elsie's sake," said Miss Thornton; "I feel quite sure of that. He never does anything that is not meant for her in some way. I suppose it amuses her to have her cousin about the house. She rides a good deal since he has been here. Have you seen them galloping about together? He looks like my idea of a Spanish bandit on that wild horse of his."

"Possibly he has been one, — or is one," said the Judge, — smiling as men smile whose lips have often been freighted with the life and death of their fellow-creatures. "I met them riding the other day. Perhaps Dudley is right, if it pleases her to have a companion. What will happen, though, if he makes love to her? Will Elsie be easily taken with such a fellow? You young folks are supposed to know more about these matters than we middle-aged people."

"Nobody can tell. Elsie is not like anybody else. The girls who have seen most of her think she hates men, all but 'Dudley,' as she calls her father. Some of them doubt whether she loves him. They doubt whether she can love anything human, except perhaps the old black woman who has taken care of her since she was a baby. The

village people have the strangest stories about her: you know what they call her?"

She whispered three words in her father's ear. The Judge changed color as she spoke, sighed deeply, and was silent as if lost in thought for a moment.

"I remember her mother," he said, "so well! A sweeter creature never lived. Elsie has something of her in her look, but those are not her mother's eyes. They were dark, but soft, as in all I ever saw of her race. Her father's are dark too, but mild, and even tender, I should say. I don't know what there is about Elsie's, — but do you know, my dear, I find myself curiously influenced by them? I have had to face a good many sharp eyes and hard ones, — murderers' eyes and pirates', — men who had to be watched in the bar, where they stood on trial, for fear they should spring on the prosecuting officers like tigers, — but I never saw such eyes as Elsie's; and yet they have a kind of drawing virtue or power about them, — I don't know what else to call it: have you never observed this?"

His daughter smiled in her turn.

"Never observed it? Why, of course, nobody could be with Elsie Venner and not observe it. There are a good many other strange things about her: did you ever notice how she dresses?"

"Why, handsomely enough, I should think," the Judge answered. "I suppose she dresses as she likes, and sends to the city for what she

wants. What do you mean in particular? We men notice effects in dress, but not much in detail."

"You never noticed the colors and patterns of her dresses? You never remarked anything curious about her ornaments? Well! I don't believe you men know, half the time, whether a lady wears a ninepenny collar or a thread-lace cape worth a thousand dollars. I don't believe you know a silk dress from a bombazine one. I don't believe you can tell whether a woman is in black or in colors, unless you happen to know she is a widow. Elsie Venner has a strange taste in dress, let me tell you. She sends for the oddest patterns of stuffs, and picks out the most curious things at the jeweller's, whenever she goes to town with her father. They say the old Doctor tells him to let her have her way about all such matters. Afraid of her mind, if she is contradicted, I suppose. — You've heard about her going to school at that place, — the 'Institoot,' as those people call it? They say she's bright enough in her way, — has studied at home, you know, with her father a good deal, — knows some modern languages and Latin, I believe: at any rate, she would have it so, — she must go to the 'Institoot.' They have a very good female teacher there, I hear; and the new master, that young Mr. Langdon, looks and talks like a well-educated young man. I wonder what they'll make of Elsie, between them!"

So they talked at the Judge's, in the calm, judicial-looking mansion-house, in the grave, still library, with the troops of wan-hued law-books staring blindly out of their titles at them as they talked, like the ghosts of dead attorneys fixed motionless and speechless, each with a thin, golden film over his unwinking eyes.

In the mean time, everything went on quietly enough after Cousin Richard's return. A man of sense, — that is, a man who knows perfectly well that a cool head is worth a dozen warm hearts in carrying the fortress of a woman's affections, (not yours, "Astarte," nor yours, "Viola,") — who knows that men are rejected by women every day because they, the men, love them, and are accepted every day because they do not, and therefore can study the arts of pleasing, — a man of sense, when he finds he has established his second parallel too soon, retires quietly to his first, and begins working on his covered ways again. [The whole art of love may be read in any Encyclopædia under the title *Fortification*, where the terms just used are explained.] After the little adventure of the necklace, Dick retreated at once to his first parallel. Elsie loved riding, — and would go off with him on a gallop now and then. He was a master of all those strange Indian horseback-feats which shame the tricks of the circus-riders, and used to astonish and almost amuse her sometimes by disappearing from his saddle, like a phantom horseman,

lying flat against the side of the bounding creature that bore him, as if he were a hunting leopard with his claws in the horse's flank and flattening himself out against his heaving ribs. Elsie knew a little Spanish too, which she had learned from the young person who had taught her dancing, and Dick enlarged her vocabulary with a few soft phrases, and would sing her a song sometimes, touching the air upon an ancient-looking guitar they had found with the ghostly things in the garret, — a quaint old instrument, marked E. M. on the back, and supposed to have belonged to a certain Elizabeth Mascarene, before mentioned in connection with a work of art, — a fair, dowerless lady, who smiled and sung and faded away, unwedded, a hundred years ago, as dowerless ladies, not a few, are smiling and singing and fading now, — God grant each of them His love, — and one human heart as its interpreter!

As for school, Elsie went or stayed away as she liked. Sometimes, when they thought she was at her desk in the great school-room, she would be on The Mountain, — alone always. Dick wanted to go with her, but she would never let him. Once, when she had followed the zigzag path a little way up, she looked back and caught a glimpse of him following her. She turned and passed him without a word, but giving him a look which seemed to make the scars on his wrist tingle, went to her room, where she locked herself

up, and did not come out again till evening,— Old Sophy having brought her food, and set it down, not speaking, but looking into her eyes inquiringly, like a dumb beast trying to feel out his master's will in his face. The evening was clear and the moon shining. As Dick sat at his chamber-window, looking at the mountain-side, he saw a gray-dressed figure flit between the trees and steal along the narrow path which led upward. Elsie's pillow was unpressed that night, but she had not been missed by the household,— for Dick knew enough to keep his own counsel. The next morning she avoided him and went off early to school. It was the same morning that the young master found the flower between the leaves of his Virgil.

The girl got over her angry fit, and was pleasant enough with her cousin for a few days after this; but she shunned rather than sought him. She had taken a new interest in her books, and especially in certain poetical readings which the master conducted with the elder scholars. This gave Master Langdon a good chance to study her ways when her eye was on her book, to notice the inflections of her voice, to watch for any expression of her sentiments; for, to tell the truth, he had a kind of fear that the girl had taken a fancy to him, and, though she interested him, he did not wish to study her heart from the inside.

The more he saw her, the more the sadness of her beauty wrought upon him. She looked as if

she might hate, but could not love. She hardly smiled at anything, spoke rarely, but seemed to feel that her natural power of expression lay all in her bright eyes, the force of which so many had felt, but none perhaps had tried to explain to themselves. A person accustomed to watch the faces of those who were ailing in body or mind, and to search in every line and tint for some underlying source of disorder, could hardly help analyzing the impression such a face produced upon him. The light of those beautiful eyes was like the lustre of ice; in all her features there was nothing of that human warmth which shows that sympathy has reached the soul beneath the mask of flesh it wears. The look was that of remoteness, of utter isolation. There was in its stony apathy, it seemed to him, the pathos which we find in the blind who show no film or speck over the organs of sight; for Nature had meant her to be lovely, and left out nothing but love. And yet the master could not help feeling that some instinct was working in this girl which was in some way leading her to seek his presence. She did not lift her glittering eyes upon him as at first. It seemed strange that she did not, for they were surely her natural weapons of conquest. Her color did not come and go like that of young girls under excitement. She had a clear brunette complexion, a little sun-touched, it may be,—for the master noticed once, when her necklace was slightly displaced, that a faint ring or band of a

little lighter shade than the rest of the surface encircled her neck. What was the slight peculiarity of her enunciation, when she read? Not a lisp, certainly, but the least possible imperfection in articulating some of the lingual sounds,—just enough to be noticed at first, and quite forgotten after being a few times heard.

Not a word about the flower on either side. It was not uncommon for the school-girls to leave a rose or pink or wild flower on the teacher's desk. Finding it in the Virgil was nothing, after all; it was a little delicate flower, which looked as if it were made to press, and it was probably shut in by accident at the particular place where he found it. He took it into his head to examine it in a botanical point of view. He found it was not common,—that it grew only in certain localities,—and that one of these was among the rocks of the eastern spur of The Mountain.

It happened to come into his head how the Swiss youth climb the sides of the Alps to find the flower called the *Edelweiss* for the maidens whom they wish to please. It is a pretty fancy, that of scaling some dangerous height before the dawn, so as to gather the flower in its freshness, that the favored maiden may wear it to church on Sunday morning, a proof at once of her lover's devotion and his courage. Mr. Bernard determined to explore the region where this flower was said to grow, that he might see where the wild girl sought the blossoms of which Nature was so jealous.

It was on a warm, fair Saturday afternoon that he undertook his land-voyage of discovery. He had more curiosity, it may be, than he would have owned; for he had heard of the girl's wandering habits, and the guesses about her sylvan haunts, and was thinking what the chances were that he should meet her in some strange place, or come upon traces of her which would tell secrets she would not care to have known.

The woods are all alive to one who walks through them with his mind in an excited state, and his eyes and ears wide open. The trees are always talking, not merely whispering with their leaves, (for every tree talks to itself in that way, even when it stands alone in the middle of a pasture,) but grating their boughs against each other, as old horn-handed farmers press their dry, rustling palms together, dropping a nut or a leaf or a twig, clicking to the tap of a woodpecker, or rustling as a squirrel flashes along a branch. It was now the season of singing-birds, and the woods were haunted with mysterious, tender music. The voices of the birds which love the deeper shades of the forest are sadder than those of the open fields: these are the nuns who have taken the veil, the hermits that have hidden themselves away from the world and tell their griefs to the infinite listening Silences of the wilderness, — for the one deep inner silence that Nature breaks with her fitful superficial sounds becomes multiplied as the image of a star in ruffled waters.

Strange! The woods at first convey the impression of profound repose, and yet, if you watch their ways with open ear, you find the life which is in them is restless and nervous as that of a woman: the little twigs are crossing and twining and separating like slender fingers that cannot be still; the stray leaf is to be flattened into its place like a truant curl; the limbs sway and twist, impatient of their constrained attitude; and the rounded masses of foliage swell upward and subside from time to time with long soft sighs, and, it may be, the falling of a few rain-drops which had lain hidden among the deeper shadows. I pray you, notice, in the sweet summer days which will soon see you among the mountains, this inward tranquillity that belongs to the heart of the woodland, with this nervousness, for I do not know what else to call it, of outer movement. One would say, that Nature, like untrained persons, could not sit still without nestling about or doing something with her limbs or features, and that high breeding was only to be looked for in trim gardens, where the soul of the trees is ill at ease perhaps, but their manners are unexceptionable, and a rustling branch or leaf falling out of season is an indecorum. The real forest is hardly still except in the Indian summer; then there is death in the house, and they are waiting for the sharp shrunk-en months to come with white raiment for the summer's burial.

There were many hemlocks in this neighbor-

hood, the grandest and most solemn of all the forest-trees in the mountain regions. Up to a certain period of growth they are eminently beautiful, their boughs disposed in the most graceful pagoda-like series of close terraces, thick and dark with green crystalline leaflets. In spring the tender shoots come out of a paler green, finger-like, as if they were pointing to the violets at their feet. But when the trees have grown old, and their rough boles measure a yard and more through their diameter, they are no longer beautiful, but they have a sad solemnity all their own, too full of meaning to require the heart's comment to be framed in words. Below, all their earthward-looking branches are sapless and shattered, splintered by the weight of many winters' snows; above, they are still green and full of life, but their summits overtop all the deciduous trees around them, and in their companionship with heaven they are alone. On these the lightning loves to fall. One such Mr. Bernard saw, — or rather, what had been one such; for the bolt had torn the tree like an explosion from within, and the ground was strewed all around the broken stump with flakes of rough bark and strips and chips of shivered wood, into which the old tree had been rent by the bursting rocket from the thunder-cloud.

— The master had struck up The Mountain obliquely from the western side of the Dudley mansion-house. In this way he ascended until

he reached a point many hundred feet above the level of the plain, and commanding all the country beneath and around. Almost at his feet he saw the mansion-house, the chimney standing out of the middle of the roof, or rather, like a black square hole in it, — the trees almost directly over their stems, the fences as lines, the whole nearly as an architect would draw a ground-plan of the house and the inclosures round it. It frightened him to see how the huge masses of rock and old forest-growths hung over the home below. As he descended a little and drew near the ledge of evil name, he was struck with the appearance of a long narrow fissure that ran parallel with it and above it for many rods, not seemingly of very old standing, — for there were many fibres of roots which had evidently been snapped asunder when the rent took place, and some of which were still succulent in both separated portions.

Mr. Bernard had made up his mind, when he set forth, not to come back before he had examined the dreaded ledge. He had half persuaded himself that it was scientific curiosity. He wished to examine the rocks, *to see what flowers grew there*, and perhaps to pick up an adventure in the zoölogical line; for he had on a pair of high, stout boots, and he carried a stick in his hand, which was forked at one extremity, so as to be very convenient to hold down a *crotalus* with, if he should happen to encounter

one. He knew the aspect of the ledge from a distance; for its bald and leprous-looking declivities stood out in their nakedness from the wooded sides of The Mountain, when this was viewed from certain points of the village. But the nearer aspect of the blasted region had something frightful in it. The cliffs were water-worn, as if they had been gnawed for thousands of years by hungry waves. In some places they overhung their base so as to look like leaning towers which might topple over at any minute. In other parts they were scooped into niches or caverns. Here and there they were cracked in deep fissures, some of them of such width that one might enter them, if he cared to run the risk of meeting the regular tenants, who might treat him as an intruder.

Parts of the ledge were cloven perpendicularly, with nothing but cracks or slightly projecting edges in which or on which a foot could find hold. High up on one of these precipitous walls of rock he saw some tufts of flowers, and knew them at once for the same that he had found between the leaves of his Virgil. Not there, surely! No woman would have clung against that steep, rough parapet to gather an idle blossom. And yet the master looked round everywhere, and even up the side of that rock, to see if there were no signs of a woman's footstep. He peered about curiously, as if his eye might fall on some of those fragments of dress

which women leave after them, whenever they run against each other or against anything else, — in crowded ballrooms, in the brushwood after picnics, on the fences after rambles, scattered round over every place which has witnessed an act of violence, where rude hands have been laid upon them. Nothing. Stop, though, one moment. That stone is smooth and polished, as if it had been somewhat worn by the pressure of human feet. There is one twig broken among the stems of that clump of shrubs. He put his foot upon the stone and took hold of the close-clinging shrub. In this way he turned a sharp angle of the rock and found himself on a natural platform, which lay in front of one of the wider fissures, — whether the mouth of a cavern or not he could not yet tell. A flat stone made an easy seat, upon which he sat down, as he was very glad to do, and looked mechanically about him. A small fragment splintered from the rock was at his feet. He took it and threw it down the declivity a little below where he sat. He looked about for a stem or a straw of some kind to bite upon, — a country-instinct, — relic, no doubt, of the old vegetable-feeding habits of Eden. Is that a stem or a straw? He picked it up. It was a hair-pin.

To say that Mr. Langdon had a strange sort of thrill shoot through him at the sight of this harmless little implement would be a statement not at variance with the fact of the case. That

smooth stone had been often trodden, and by what foot he could not doubt. He rose up from his seat to look round for other signs of a woman's visits. What if there is a cavern here, where she has a retreat, fitted up, perhaps, as anchorites fitted their cells,—nay, it may be, carpeted and mirrored, and with one of those tiger-skins for a couch, such as they say the girl loves to lie on? Let us look, at any rate.

Mr. Bernard walked to the mouth of the cavern or fissure and looked into it. His look was met by the glitter of two diamond eyes, small, sharp, cold, shining out of the darkness, but gliding with a smooth, steady motion towards the light, and himself. He stood fixed, struck dumb, staring back into them with dilating pupils and sudden numbness of fear that cannot move, as in the terror of dreams. The two sparks of light came forward until they grew to circles of flame, and all at once lifted themselves up as if in angry surprise. Then for the first time thrilled in Mr. Bernard's ears the dreadful sound that nothing which breathes, be it man or brute, can hear unmoved,—the long, loud, stinging whirr, as the huge, thick-bodied reptile shook his many-jointed rattle and adjusted his loops for the fatal stroke. His eyes were drawn as with magnets toward the circles of flame. His ears rung as in the overture to the swooning dream of chloroform. Nature was before man with her anæsthetics: the cat's first shake stupefies the mouse; the lion's

first shake deadens the man's fear and feeling; and the *crotalus* paralyzes before he strikes. He waited as in a trance,—waited as one that longs to have the blow fall, and all over, as the man who shall be in two pieces in a second waits for the axe to drop. But while he looked straight into the flaming eyes, it seemed to him that they were losing their light and terror, that they were growing tame and dull; the charm was dissolving, the numbness was passing away, he could move once more. He heard a light breathing close to his ear, and, half turning, saw the face of Elsie Venner, looking motionless into the reptile's eyes, which had shrunk and faded under the stronger enchantment of her own.

CHAPTER XIV.

FAMILY SECRETS.

It was commonly understood in the town of Rockland that Dudley Venner had had a great deal of trouble with that daughter of his, so handsome, yet so peculiar, about whom there were so many strange stories. There was no end to the tales which were told of her extraordinary doings. Yet her name was never coupled with that of any youth or man, until this cousin had provoked remark by his visit; and even then it was oftener in the shape of wondering conjectures whether he would dare to make love to her, than in any pretended knowledge of their relations to each other, that the public tongue exercised its village-privilege of tattle.

The more common version of the trouble at the mansion-house was this:—Elsie was not exactly in her right mind. Her temper was singular, her tastes were anomalous, her habits were lawless, her antipathies were many and intense, and she was liable to explosions of ungovernable anger. Some said that was not the worst of it. At nearly fifteen years old, when she was growing

fast, and in an irritable state of mind and body, she had had a governess placed over her for whom she had conceived an aversion. It was whispered among a few who knew more of the family secrets than others, that, worried and exasperated by the presence and jealous oversight of this person, Elsie had attempted to get finally rid of her by unlawful means, such as young girls have been known to employ in their straits, and to which the sex at all ages has a certain instinctive tendency, in preference to more palpable instruments for the righting of its wrongs. At any rate, this governess had been taken suddenly ill, and the Doctor had been sent for at midnight. Old Sophy had taken her master into a room apart, and said a few words to him which turned him as white as a sheet. As soon as he recovered himself, he sent Sophy out, called in the old Doctor, and gave him some few hints, on which he acted at once, and had the satisfaction of seeing his patient out of danger before he left in the morning. It is proper to say, that, during the following days, the most thorough search was made in every nook and cranny of those parts of the house which Elsie chiefly haunted, but nothing was found which might be accused of having been the intentional cause of the probably accidental sudden illness of the governess. From this time forward her father was never easy. Should he keep her apart, or shut her up, for fear of risk to others, and so lose every chance of

restoring her mind to its healthy tone by kindly influences and intercourse with wholesome natures? There was no proof, only presumption, as to the agency of Elsie in the matter referred to. But the doubt was worse, perhaps, than certainty would have been, — for then he would have known what to do.

He took the old Doctor as his adviser. The shrewd old man listened to the father's story, his explanations of possibilities, of probabilities, of dangers, of hopes. When he had got through, the Doctor looked him in the face steadily, as if he were saying, *Is that all?*

The father's eyes fell. This was *not* all. There was something at the bottom of his soul which he could not bear to speak of, — nay, which, as often as it reared itself through the dark waves of unworded consciousness into the breathing air of thought, he trod down as the ruined angels tread down a lost soul trying to come up out of the seething sea of torture. Only this one daughter! No! God never would have ordained such a thing. There was nothing ever heard of like it; it could not be; she was ill, — she would outgrow all these singularities; he had had an aunt who was peculiar; he had heard that hysteric girls showed the strangest forms of moral obliquity for a time, but came right at last. She would change all at once, when her health got more firmly settled in the course of her growth. Are there not rough buds that open into sweet flowers? Are

there not fruits, which, while unripe, are not to be tasted or endured, which mature into the richest taste and fragrance? In God's good time she would come to her true nature; her eyes would lose that frightful, cold glitter; her lips would not feel so cold when she pressed them against his cheek; and that faint birth-mark, her mother swooned when she first saw, would fade wholly out,—it was less marked, surely, now than it used to be!

So Dudley Venner felt, and would have thought, if he had let his thoughts breathe the air of his soul. But the Doctor read through words and thoughts and all into the father's consciousness. There are states of mind which may be shared by two persons in presence of each other, which remain not only unworded, but *unthoughted*, if such a word may be coined for our special need. Such a mutually interpenetrative consciousness there was between the father and the old physician. By a common impulse, both of them rose in a mechanical way and went to the western window, where each started, as he saw the other's look directed towards the white stone which stood in the midst of the small plot of green turf.

The Doctor had, for a moment, forgotten himself, but he looked up at the clouds, which were angry, and said, as if speaking of the weather, "It is dark now, but we hope it will clear up by-and-by. There are a great many more clouds than rains, and more rains than strokes of light-

ning, and more strokes of lightning than there are people killed. We must let this girl of ours have her way, as far as it is safe. Send away this woman she hates, quietly. Get her a foreigner for a governess, if you can, — one that can dance and sing and will teach her. In the house old Sophy will watch her best. Out of it you must trust her, I am afraid, — for she will not be followed round, and she is in less danger than you think. If she wanders at night, find her, if you can; the woods are not absolutely safe. If she will be friendly with any young people, have them to see her, — young men, especially. She will not love any one easily, perhaps not at all; yet love would be more like to bring her right than anything else. If any young person seems in danger of falling in love with her, send him to me for counsel."

Dry, hard advice, but given from a kind heart, with a moist eye, and in tones which tried to be cheerful and were full of sympathy. This advice was the key to the more than indulgent treatment which, as we have seen, the girl had received from her father and all about her. The old Doctor often came in, in the kindest, most natural sort of way, got into pleasant relations with Elsie by always treating her in the same easy manner as at the great party, encouraging all her harmless fancies, and rarely reminding her that he was a professional adviser, except when she came out of her own accord, as in the talk they

had at the party, telling him of some wild trick she had been playing.

"Let her go to the girls' school, by all means," said the Doctor, when she had begun to talk about it. "Possibly she may take to some of the girls or of the teachers. Anything to interest her. Friendship, love, religion, — whatever will set her nature at work. We must have head-way on, or there will be no piloting her. Action first of all, and then we will see what to do with it."

So, when Cousin Richard came along, the Doctor, though he did not like his looks any too well, told her father to encourage his staying for a time. If she liked him, it was good; if she only tolerated him, it was better than nothing.

"You know something about that nephew of yours, during these last years, I suppose?" the Doctor said. "Looks as if he had seen life. Has a scar that was made by a sword-cut, and a white spot on the side of his neck that looks like a bullet-mark. I think he has been what folks call a 'hard customer.'"

Dudley Venner owned that he had heard little or nothing of him of late years. He had invited himself, and of course it would not be decent not to receive him as a relative. He thought Elsie rather liked having him about the house for a while. She was very capricious, — acted as if she fancied him one day and disliked him the next. He did not know, — but sometimes

thought that this nephew of his might take a serious liking to Elsie. What should he do about it, if it turned out so?

The Doctor lifted his eyebrows a little. He thought there was no fear. Elsie was naturally what they call a man-hater, and there was very little danger of any sudden passion springing up between two such young persons. Let him stay awhile; it gives her something to think about. So he stayed awhile, as we have seen.

The more Mr. Richard became acquainted with the family, — that is, with the two persons of whom it consisted, — the more favorably the idea of a permanent residence in the mansion-house seemed to impress him. The estate was large, — hundreds of acres, with woodlands and meadows of great value. The father and daughter had been living quietly, and there could not be a doubt that the property which came through the Dudleys must have largely increased of late years. It was evident enough that they had an abundant income, from the way in which Elsie's caprices were indulged. She had horses and carriages to suit herself; she sent to the great city for everything she wanted in the way of dress. Even her diamonds — and the young man knew something about these gems — must be of considerable value; and yet she wore them carelessly, as it pleased her fancy. She had precious old laces, too, almost worth their weight in diamonds, — laces which had been snatched from

altars in ancient Spanish cathedrals during the wars, and which it would not be safe to leave a duchess alone with for ten minutes. The old house was fat with the deposits of rich generations which had gone before. The famous "golden" fire-set was a purchase of one of the family who had been in France during the Revolution, and must have come from a princely palace, if not from one of the royal residences. As for silver, the iron closet which had been made in the dining-room wall was running over with it: tea-kettles, coffee-pots, heavy-lidded tankards, chafing-dishes, punch-bowls, all that all the Dudleys had ever used, from the caudle-cup which used to be handed round the young mother's chamber, and the porringer from which children scooped their bread-and-milk with spoons as solid as ingots, to that ominous vessel, on the upper shelf, far back in the dark, with a spout like a slender italic *S*, out of which the sick and dying, all along the last century, and since, had taken the last drops that passed their lips. Without being much of a scholar, Dick could see well enough, too, that the books in the library had been ordered from the great London houses, whose imprint they bore, by persons who knew what was best and meant to have it. A man does not require much learning to feel pretty sure, when he takes one of those solid, smooth, velvet-leaved quartos, say a Baskerville Addison, for instance, bound in red morocco, with a margin of gold as rich as

the embroidery of a prince's collar, as Vandyck drew it, — he need not know much to feel pretty sure that a score or two of shelves full of such books mean that it took a long purse, as well as a literary taste, to bring them together.

To all these attractions the mind of this thoughtful young gentleman may be said to have been fully open. He did not disguise from himself, however, that there were a number of drawbacks in the way of his becoming established as the heir of the Dudley mansion-house and fortune. In the first place, Cousin Elsie was, unquestionably, very piquant, very handsome, game as a hawk, and hard to please, which made her worth trying for. But then there was something about Cousin Elsie, — (the small, white scars began stinging, as he said this to himself, and he pushed his sleeve up to look at them,) — there was something about Cousin Elsie he couldn't make out. What was the matter with her eyes, that they sucked your life out of you in that strange way? What did she always wear a necklace for? Had she some such love-token on her neck as the old Don's revolver had left on his? How safe would anybody feel to live with her? Besides, her father would last forever, if he was left to himself. And he may take it into his head to marry again. That would be pleasant!

So talked Cousin Richard to himself, in the calm of the night and in the tranquillity of his

own soul. There was much to be said on both sides. It was a balance to be struck after the two columns were added up. He struck the balance, and came to the conclusion that he would fall in love with Elsie Venner.

The intelligent reader will not confound this matured and serious intention of falling in love with the young lady with that mere impulse of the moment before mentioned as an instance of making love. On the contrary, the moment Mr. Richard had made up his mind that he should fall in love with Elsie, he began to be more reserved with her, and to try to make friends in other quarters. Sensible men, you know, care very little what a girl's present fancy is. The question is: Who manages her, and how can you get at that person or those persons? Her foolish little sentiments are all very well in their way; but business is business, and we can't stop for such trifles. The old political wire-pullers never go near the man they want to gain, if they can help it; they find out who his intimates and managers are, and work through them. Always handle any positively electrical body, whether it is charged with passion or power, with some non-conductor between you and it, not with your naked hands. — The above were some of the young gentleman's working axioms; and he proceeded to act in accordance with them.

He began by paying his court more assiduously to his uncle. It was not very hard to ingratiate

himself in that quarter; for his manners were insinuating, and his precocious experience of life made him entertaining. The old neglected billiard-room was soon put in order, and Dick, who was a magnificent player, had a series of games with his uncle, in which, singularly enough, he was beaten, though his antagonist had been out of play for years. He evinced a profound interest in the family history, insisted on having the details of its early alliances, and professed a great pride in it, which he had inherited from his father, who, though he had allied himself with the daughter of an alien race, had yet chosen one with the real azure blood in her veins, as proud as if she had Castile and Aragon for her dower and the Cid for her grandpapa. He also asked a great deal of advice, such as inexperienced young persons are in need of, and listened to it with due reverence.

It is not very strange that Uncle Dudley took a kinder view of his nephew than the Judge, who thought he could read a questionable history in his face, — or the old Doctor, who knew men's temperaments and organizations pretty well, and had his prejudices about races, and could tell an old sword-cut and a bullet-mark in two seconds from a scar got by falling against the fender, or a mark left by king's evil. He could not be expected to share our own prejudices; for he had heard nothing of the wild youth's adventures, or his scamper over the Pam-

pas at short notice. So, then, "Richard Venner, Esquire, guest of Dudley Venner, Esquire, at his elegant mansion," prolonged his visit until his presence became something like a matter of habit, and the neighbors began to think that the fine old house would be illuminated before long for a grand marriage.

He had done pretty well with the father: the next thing was to gain over the nurse. Old Sophy was as cunning as a red fox or a gray woodchuck. She had nothing in the world to do but to watch Elsie; she had nothing to care for but this girl and her father. She had never liked Dick too well; for he used to make faces at her and tease her when he was a boy, and now he was a man there was something about him — she could not tell what — that made her suspicious of him. It was no small matter to get her over to his side.

The jet-black Africans know that gold never looks so well as on the foil of their dark skins. Dick found in his trunk a string of gold beads, such as are manufactured in some of our cities, which he had brought from the gold region of Chili, — so he said, — for the express purpose of giving them to old Sophy. These Africans, too, have a perfect passion for gay-colored clothing; being condemned by Nature, as it were, to a perpetual mourning-suit, they love to enliven it with all sorts of variegated stuffs of sprightly patterns, aflame with red and yellow. The considerate young man had remembered this, too, and brought home for Sophy some handkerchiefs of rainbow

hues, which had been strangely overlooked till now, at the bottom of one of his trunks. Old Sophy took his gifts, but kept her black eyes open and watched every movement of the young people all the more closely. It was through her that the father had always known most of the actions and tendencies of his daughter.

In the mean time the strange adventure on The Mountain had brought the young master into new relations with Elsie. She had led him out of danger; perhaps saved him from death by the strange power she exerted. He was grateful, and yet shuddered at the recollection of the whole scene. In his dreams he was pursued by the glare of cold glittering eyes, — whether they were in the head of a woman or of a reptile he could not always tell, the images had so run together. But he could not help seeing that the eyes of the young girl had been often, very often, turned upon him when he had been looking away, and fell as his own glance met them. Helen Darley told him very plainly that this girl was thinking about him more than about her book. Dick Venner found she was getting more constant in her attendance at school. He learned, on inquiry, that there was a new master, a handsome young man. The handsome young man would not have liked the look that came over Dick's face when he heard this fact mentioned.

In short, everything was getting tangled up together, and there would be no chance of disentangling the threads in this chapter.

CHAPTER XV.

PHYSIOLOGICAL.

IF Master Bernard felt a natural gratitude to his young pupil for saving him from an imminent peril, he was in a state of infinite perplexity to know why he should have needed such aid. He, an active, muscular, courageous, adventurous young fellow, with a stick in his hand, ready to hold down the Old Serpent himself, if he had come in his way, to stand still, staring into those two eyes, until they came up close to him, and the strange, terrible sound seemed to freeze him stiff where he stood, — what was the meaning of it? Again, what was the influence this girl had seemingly exerted, under which the venomous creature had collapsed in such a sudden way? Whether he had been awake or dreaming he did not feel quite sure. He knew he had gone up The Mountain, at any rate; he knew he had come down The Mountain with the girl walking just before him; — there was no forgetting her figure, as she walked on in silence, her braided locks falling a little, for want of the lost hair-pin, perhaps, and looking like a wreathing coil of —

Shame on such fancies! — to wrong that supreme crowning gift of abounding Nature, a rush of shining black hair, which, shaken loose, would cloud her all round, like Godiva, from brow to instep! He was sure he had sat down before the fissure or cave. He was sure that he was led softly away from the place, and that it was Elsie who had led him. There was the hair-pin to show that so far it was not a dream. But between these recollections came a strange confusion; and the more the master thought, the more he was perplexed to know whether she had waked him, sleeping, as he sat on the stone, from some frightful dream, such as may come in a very brief slumber, or whether she had bewitched him into a trance with those strange eyes of hers, or whether it was all true, and he must solve its problem as he best might.

There was another recollection connected with this mountain adventure. As they approached the mansion-house, they met a young man, whom Mr. Bernard remembered having seen once at least before, and whom he had heard of as a cousin of the young girl. As Cousin Richard Venner, the person in question, passed them, he took the measure, so to speak, of Mr. Bernard, with a look so piercing, so exhausting, so practised, so profoundly suspicious, that the young master felt in an instant that he had an enemy in this handsome youth, — an enemy, too, who was like to be subtle and dangerous.

Mr. Bernard had made up his mind, that, come what might, enemy or no enemy, live or die, he would solve the mystery of Elsie Venner, sooner or later. He was not a man to be frightened out of his resolution by a scowl, or a stiletto, or any unknown means of mischief, of which a whole armory was hinted at in that passing look Dick Venner had given him. Indeed, like most adventurous young persons, he found a kind of charm in feeling that there might be some dangers in the way of his investigations. Some rumors which had reached him about the supposed suitor of Elsie Venner, who was thought to be a desperate kind of fellow; and whom some believed to be an unscrupulous adventurer, added a curious, romantic kind of interest to the course of physiological and psychological inquiries he was about instituting.

The afternoon on The Mountain was still uppermost in his mind. Of course he knew the common stories about fascination. He had once been himself an eye-witness of the charming of a small bird by one of our common harmless serpents. Whether a human being could be reached by this subtle agency, he had been skeptical, notwithstanding the mysterious relation generally felt to exist between man and this creature, "cursed above all cattle and above every beast of the field,"—a relation which some interpret as the fruit of the curse, and others hold to be so instinctive that this animal has been for that reason

adopted as the natural symbol of evil. There was another solution, however, supplied him by his professional reading. The curious work of Mr. Braid of Manchester had made him familiar with the phenomena of a state allied to that produced by animal magnetism, and called by that writer by the name of *hypnotism*. He found, by referring to his note-book, the statement was, that, by fixing the eyes on a *bright object* so placed as to produce a strain upon the eyes and eyelids, and to maintain a *steady fixed stare*, there comes on in a few seconds a very singular condition, characterized by *muscular rigidity* and *inability to move*, with a strange *exaltation of most of the senses*, and generally a closure of the eyelids, — this condition being followed by *torpor*.

Now this statement of Mr. Braid's, well known to the scientific world, and the truth of which had been confirmed by Mr. Bernard in certain experiments he had instituted, as it has been by many other experimenters, went far to explain the strange impressions, of which, waking or dreaming, he had certainly been the subject. His nervous system had been in a high state of exaltation at the time. He remembered how the little noises that made rings of sound in the silence of the woods, like pebbles dropped in still waters, had reached his inner consciousness. He remembered that singular sensation in the roots of the hair, when he came on the traces of the girl's presence, reminding him of a line in a certain

poem which he had read lately with a new and peculiar interest. He even recalled a curious evidence of exalted sensibility and irritability, in the twitching of the minute muscles of the internal ear at every unexpected sound, producing an odd little snap in the middle of the head, which proved to him that he was getting very nervous.

The next thing was to find out whether it were possible that the venomous creature's eyes should have served the purpose of Mr. Braid's "bright object" held very close to the person experimented on, or whether they had any special power which could be made the subject of exact observation.

For this purpose Mr. Bernard considered it necessary to get a live *crotalus* or two into his possession, if this were possible. On inquiry, he found that there was a certain family living far up the mountain-side, not a mile from the ledge, the members of which were said to have taken these creatures occasionally, and not to be in any danger, or at least in any fear, of being injured by them. He applied to these people, and offered a reward sufficient to set them at work to capture some of these animals, if such a thing were possible.

A few days after this, a dark, gypsy-looking woman presented herself at his door. She held up her apron as if it contained something precious in the bag she made with it.

"Y'wanted some rattlers," said the woman. "Here they be."

She opened her apron and showed a coil of rattlesnakes lying very peaceably in its fold. They lifted their heads up, as if they wanted to see what was going on, but showed no sign of anger.

"Are you crazy?" said Mr. Bernard. "You're dead in an hour, if one of those creatures strikes you!"

He drew back a little, as he spoke; it might be simple disgust; it might be fear; it might be what we call antipathy, which is different from either, and which will sometimes show itself in paleness, and even faintness, produced by objects perfectly harmless and not in themselves offensive to any sense.

"Lord bless you," said the woman, "rattlers never touches our folks. I'd jest 'z lieves handle them creaturs as so many stripéd snakes."

So saying, she put their heads down with her hand, and packed them together in her apron as if they had been bits of cart-rope.

Mr. Bernard had never heard of the power, or, at least, the belief in the possession of a power by certain persons, which enables them to handle these frightful reptiles with perfect impunity. The fact, however, is well known to others, and more especially to a very distinguished Professor in one of the leading institutions of the great city of the land, whose experiences in the neigh-

borhood of Graylock, as he will doubtless inform the curious, were very much like those of the young master.

Mr. Bernard had a wired cage ready for his formidable captives, and studied their habits and expression with a strange sort of interest. What did the Creator mean to signify, when he made such shapes of horror, and, as if he had doubly cursed this envenomed wretch, had set a mark upon him and sent him forth, the Cain of the brotherhood of serpents? It was a very curious fact that the first train of thoughts Mr. Bernard's small menagerie suggested to him was the grave, though somewhat worn, subject of the origin of evil. There is now to be seen in a tall glass jar, in the Museum of Comparative Anatomy at Cantabridge in the territory of the Massachusetts, a huge *crotalus*, of a species which grows to more frightful dimensions than our own, under the hotter skies of South America. Look at it, ye who would know what is the tolerance, the freedom from prejudice, which can suffer such an incarnation of all that is devilish to lie unharmed in the cradle of Nature! Learn, too, that there are many things in this world which we are warned to shun, and are even suffered to slay, if need be, but which we must not hate, unless we would hate what God loves and cares for.

Whatever fascination the creature might exercise in his native haunts, Mr. Bernard found himself not in the least nervous or affected in any way

while looking at his caged reptiles. When their cage was shaken, they would lift their heads and spring their rattles; but the sound was by no means so formidable to listen to as when it reverberated among the chasms of the echoing rocks. The expression of the creatures was watchful, still, grave, passionless, fate-like, suggesting a cold malignity which seemed to be waiting for its opportunity. Their awful, deep-cut mouths were sternly closed over the long hollow fangs which rested their roots against the swollen poison-gland, where the venom had been hoarding up ever since the last stroke had emptied it. They never winked, for ophidians have no movable eyelids, but kept up that awful fixed stare which made the two *unwinking* gladiators the survivors of twenty pairs matched by one of the Roman Emperors, as Pliny tells us, in his "Natural History." Their eyes did not flash, but shone with a cold still light. They were of a pale-golden or straw color, horrible to look into, with their stony calmness, their pitiless indifference, hardly enlivened by the almost imperceptible vertical slit of the pupil, through which Death seemed to be looking out like the archer behind the long narrow loop-hole in a blank turret-wall. On the whole, the caged reptiles, horrid as they were, hardly matched his recollections of what he had seen or dreamed he saw at the cavern. These looked dangerous enough, but yet quiet. A treacherous stillness, however, — as the unfor-

fortunate New York physician found, when he put his foot out to wake up the torpid creature, and instantly the fang flashed through his boot, carrying the poison into his blood, and death with it.

Mr. Bernard kept these strange creatures, and watched all their habits with a natural curiosity. In any collection of animals the venomous beasts are looked at with the greatest interest, just as the greatest villains are most run after by the unknown public. Nobody troubles himself for a common striped snake or a petty thief, but a *cobra* or a wife-killer is a centre of attraction to all eyes. These captives did very little to earn their living, but, on the other hand, their living was not expensive, their diet being nothing but air, *au naturel*. Months and months these creatures will live and seem to thrive well enough, as any showman who has them in his menagerie will testify, though they never touch anything to eat or drink.

In the mean time Mr. Bernard had become very curious about a class of subjects not treated of in any detail in those text-books accessible in most country-towns, to the exclusion of the more special treatises, and especially of the rare and ancient works found on the shelves of the larger city-libraries. He was on a visit to old Dr. Kitredge one day, having been asked by him to call in for a few moments as soon as convenient. The Doctor smiled good-humoredly when he asked him if he had an extensive collection of medical works.

"Why, no," said the old Doctor, "I haven't got a great many printed books; and what I have I don't read quite as often as I might, I'm afraid. I read and studied in the time of it, when I was in the midst of the young men who were all at work with their books; but it's a mighty hard matter, when you go off alone into the country, to keep up with all that's going on in the Societies and the Colleges. I'll tell you, though, Mr. Langdon, when a man that's once started right lives among sick folks for five-and-thirty years, as I've done, if he hasn't got a library of five-and-thirty volumes bound up in his head at the end of that time, he'd better stop driving round and sell his horse and sulky. I know the bigger part of the families within a dozen miles' ride. I know the families that have a way of living through everything, and I know the other set that have the trick of dying without any kind of reason for it. I know the years when the fevers and dysenteries are in earnest, and when they're only making believe. I know the folks that think they're dying as soon as they're sick, and the folks that never find out they're sick till they're dead. I don't want to undervalue your science, Mr. Langdon. There are things I never learned, because they came in after my day, and I am very glad to send my patients to those that do know them, when I am at fault; but I know these people about here, fathers and mothers, and children and grandchildren, so as all the science

in the world can't know them, without it takes time about it, and sees them grow up and grow old, and how the wear and tear of life comes to them. You can't tell a horse by driving him once, Mr. Langdon, nor a patient by talking half an hour with him."

"Do you know much about the Venner family?" said Mr. Bernard, in a natural way enough, the Doctor's talk having suggested the question.

The Doctor lifted his head with his accustomed movement, so as to command the young man through his spectacles.

"I know all the families of this place and its neighborhood," he answered.

"We have the young lady studying with us at the Institute," said Mr. Bernard.

"I know it," the Doctor answered. "Is she a good scholar?"

All this time the Doctor's eyes were fixed steadily on Mr. Bernard, looking through the glasses.

"She is a good scholar enough, but I don't know what to make of her. Sometimes I think she is a little out of her head. Her father, I believe, is sensible enough;—what sort of a woman was her mother, Doctor?—I suppose of course, you remember all about her?"

"Yes, I knew her mother. She was a very lovely young woman."—The Doctor put his hand to his forehead and drew a long breath.—"What is there you notice out of the way about Elsie Venner?"

"A good many things," the master answered. "She shuns all the other girls. She is getting a strange influence over my fellow-teacher, a young lady, — you know Miss Helen Darley, perhaps? I am afraid this girl will kill her. I never saw or heard of anything like it, in prose at least; — do you remember much of Coleridge's Poems, Doctor?"

The good old Doctor had to plead a negative.

"Well, no matter. Elsie would have been burned for a witch in old times. I have seen the girl look at Miss Darley when she had not the least idea of it, and all at once I would see her grow pale and moist, and sigh, and move round uneasily, and turn towards Elsie, and perhaps get up and go to her, or else have slight spasmodic movements that looked like hysterics; — do you believe in the evil eye, Doctor?"

"Mr. Langdon," the Doctor said, solemnly, "there are strange things about Elsie Venner, — very strange things. This was what I wanted to speak to you about. Let me advise you all to be very patient with the girl, but also very careful. Her love is not to be desired, and" — he spoke in a lower tone — "her hate is to be dreaded. Do you think she has any special fancy for anybody else in the school besides Miss Darley?"

Mr. Bernard could not stand the old Doctor's spectacled eyes without betraying a little of the feeling natural to a young man to whom a home question involving a possible sentiment is put suddenly.

"I have suspected," he said, — "I have had a kind of feeling — that she — Well, come, Doctor, — I don't know that there's any use in disguising the matter, — I have thought Elsie Venner had rather a fancy for somebody else, — I mean myself."

There was something so becoming in the blush with which the young man made this confession, and so manly, too, in the tone with which he spoke, so remote from any shallow vanity, such as young men who are incapable of love are apt to feel, when some loose tendril of a woman's fancy which a chance wind has blown against them twines about them for the want of anything better, that the old Doctor looked at him admiringly, and could not help thinking that it was no wonder any young girl should be pleased with him.

"You are a man of nerve, Mr. Langdon?" said the Doctor.

"I thought so till very lately," he replied. "I am not easily frightened, but I don't know but I might be bewitched or magnetized, or whatever it is when one is tied up and cannot move. I think I can find nerve enough, however, if there is any special use you want to put it to."

"Let me ask you one more question, Mr. Langdon. Do you find yourself disposed to take a special interest in Elsie, — to fall in love with her, in a word? Pardon me, for I do not ask from curiosity, but a much more serious motive."

"Elsie interests me," said the young man, "in-

terests me strangely. She has a wild flavor in her character which is wholly different from that of any human creature I ever saw. She has marks of genius, — poetic or dramatic, — I hardly know which. She read a passage from Keats's 'Lamia' the other day, in the school-room, in such a way that I declare to you I thought some of the girls would faint or go into fits. Miss Darley got up and left the room, trembling all over. Then I pity her, she is so lonely. The girls are afraid of her, and she seems to have either a dislike or a fear of them. They have all sorts of painful stories about her. They give her a name which no human creature ought to bear. They say she hides a mark on her neck by always wearing a necklace. She is very graceful, you know, and they will have it that she can twist herself into all sorts of shapes, or tie herself in a knot, if she wants to. There is not one of them that will look her in the eyes. I pity the poor girl; but, Doctor, I do not love her. I would risk my life for her, if it would do her any good, but it would be in cold blood. If her hand touches mine, it is not a thrill of passion I feel running through me, but a very different emotion. Oh, Doctor! there must be something in that creature's blood which has killed the humanity in her. God only knows the cause that has blighted such a soul in so beautiful a body! No, Doctor, I do not love the girl."

"Mr. Langdon," said the Doctor, "you are

young, and I am old. Let me talk to you with an old man's privilege, as an adviser. You have come to this country-town without suspicion, and you are moving in the midst of perils. There are things which I must not tell you now; but I may warn you. Keep your eyes open and your heart shut. If, through pitying that girl, you ever come to love her, you are lost. If you deal carelessly with her, beware! This is not all. There are other eyes on you beside Elsie Venner's. — Do you go armed?"

"I do!" said Mr. Bernard, — and he "put his hands up" in the shape of fists, in such a way as to show that he was master of the natural weapons at any rate.

The Doctor could not help smiling. But his face fell in an instant.

"You may want something more than those tools to work with. Come with me into my sanctum."

The Doctor led Mr. Bernard into a small room opening out of the study. It was a place such as anybody but a medical man would shiver to enter. There was the usual tall box with its bleached, rattling tenant; there were jars in rows where "interesting cases" outlived the grief of widows and heirs in alcoholic immortality, — for your "preparation-jar" is the true "*monumentum ære perennius*"; there were various semipossibilities of minute dimensions and unpromising developments; there were shining instruments of

evil aspect, and grim plates on the walls, and on one shelf by itself, accursed and apart, coiled in a long cylinder of spirit, a huge *crotalus*, rough-scaled, flat-headed, variegated with dull bands, one of which partially encircled the neck like a collar,—an awful wretch to look upon, with murder written all over him in horrid hieroglyphics. Mr. Bernard's look was riveted on this creature,—not fascinated certainly, for its eyes looked like white beads, being clouded by the action of the spirits in which it had been long kept,—but fixed by some indefinite sense of the renewal of a previous impression;—everybody knows the feeling, with its suggestion of some past state of existence. There was a scrap of paper on the jar, with something written on it. He was reaching up to read it when the Doctor touched him lightly.

“Look here, Mr Langdon!” he said, with a certain vivacity of manner, as if wishing to call away his attention,—“this is my armory.”

The Doctor threw open the door of a small cabinet, where were disposed in artistic patterns various weapons of offence and defence,—for he was a virtuoso in his way, and by the side of the implements of the art of healing had pleased himself with displaying a collection of those other instruments, the use of which renders the first necessary.

“See which of these weapons you would like best to carry about you,” said the Doctor.

Mr. Bernard laughed, and looked at the Doctor as if he half doubted whether he was in earnest.

"This looks dangerous enough," he said,—"for the man who carries it, at least."

He took down one of the prohibited Spanish daggers or knives which a traveller may occasionally get hold of and smuggle out of the country. The blade was broad, trowel-like, but the point drawn out several inches, so as to look like a skewer.

"This must be a jealous bull-fighter's weapon," he said, and put it back in its place.

Then he took down an ancient-looking broad-bladed dagger, with a complex aspect about it, as if it had some kind of mechanism connected with it.

"Take care!" said the Doctor; "there is a trick to that dagger."

He took it and touched a spring. The dagger split suddenly into three blades, as when one separates the forefinger and the ring-finger from the middle one. The outside blades were sharp on their outer edge. The stab was to be made with the dagger shut, then the spring touched and the split blades withdrawn.

Mr. Bernard replaced it, saying, that it would have served for side-arm to old Suwarrow, who told his men to work their bayonets back and forward when they pinned a Turk, but to wriggle them about in the wound when they stabbed a Frenchman.

"Here," said the Doctor, "this is the thing you want."

He took down a much more modern and familiar implement, — a small, beautifully finished revolver.

"I want you to carry this," he said; "and more than that, I want you to practise with it often, as for amusement, but so that it may be seen and understood that you are apt to have a pistol about you. Pistol-shooting is pleasant sport enough, and there is no reason why you should not practise it like other young fellows. And now," the Doctor said, "I have one other weapon to give you."

He took a small piece of parchment and shook a white powder into it from one of his medicine-jars. The jar was marked with the name of a mineral salt, of a nature to have been serviceable in case of sudden illness in the time of the Borgias. The Doctor folded the parchment carefully and marked the Latin name of the powder upon it.

"Here," he said, handing it to Mr. Bernard, — "you see what it is, and you know what service it can render. Keep these two protectors about your person day and night; they will not harm you, and you may want one or the other or both before you think of it."

Mr. Bernard thought it was very odd, and not very old-gentlemanlike, to be fitting him out for treason, stratagem, and spoils, in this way.

There was no harm, however, in carrying a doctor's powder in his pocket, or in amusing himself with shooting at a mark, as he had often done before. If the old gentleman had these fancies, it was as well to humor him. So he thanked old Doctor Kittredge, and shook his hand warmly as he left him.

"The fellow's hand did not tremble, nor his color change," the Doctor said, as he watched him walking away. "He is one of the right sort."

CHAPTER XVI.

EPISTOLARY.

Mr. Langdon to the Professor.

MY DEAR PROFESSOR,—

You were kind enough to promise me that you would assist me in any professional or scientific investigations in which I might become engaged. I have of late become deeply interested in a class of subjects which present peculiar difficulty, and I must exercise the privilege of questioning you on some points upon which I desire information I cannot otherwise obtain.. I would not trouble you, if I could find any person or books competent to enlighten me on some of these singular matters which have so excited me. The leading doctor here is a shrewd, sensible man, but not versed in the curiosities of medical literature.

I proceed, with your leave, to ask a considerable number of questions,—hoping to get answers to some of them, at least.

Is there any evidence that human beings can be infected or wrought upon by poisons, or otherwise, so that they shall manifest any of the peculiarities belonging to beings of a lower nature?

Can such peculiarities be transmitted by inheritance? Is there anything to countenance the stories, long and widely current, about the "evil eye"? or is it a mere fancy that such a power belongs to any human being? Have you any personal experience as to the power of *fascination* said to be exercised by certain animals? What can you make of those circumstantial statements we have seen in the papers, of children forming mysterious friendships with ophidians of different species, sharing their food with them, and seeming to be under some subtle influence exercised by those creatures? Have you read, critically, Coleridge's poem of "Christabel," and Keats's "Lamia"? If so, can you understand them, or find any physiological foundation for the story of either?

There is another set of questions of a different nature I should like to ask, but it is hardly fair to put so many on a single sheet. There is one, however, you must answer. Do you think there may be predispositions, inherited or ingrafted, but at any rate constitutional, which shall take out certain apparently voluntary determinations from the control of the will, and leave them as free from moral responsibility as the instincts of the lower animals? Do you not think there may be a *crime* which is not a *sin*?

Pardon me, my dear Sir, for troubling you with such a list of notes of interrogation. There are some *very strange* things going on here in this

place, country-town as it is. Country-life is apt to be dull; but when it once gets going, it beats the city hollow, because it gives its whole mind to what it is about. These rural sinners make terrible work with the middle of the Decalogue, when they get started. However, I hope I shall live through my year's school-keeping without catastrophes, though there are queer doings about me which puzzle me and might scare some people. If anything *should* happen, you will be one of the first to hear of it, no doubt. But I trust not to help out the editors of the "Rockland Weekly Universe" with an obituary of the late lamented, who signed himself in life

Your friend and pupil,

BERNARD C. LANGDON.

The Professor to Mr. Langdon.

MY DEAR MR. LANGDON, —

I do not wonder that you find no answer from your country friends to the curious questions you put. They belong to that middle region between science and poetry which sensible men, as they are called, are very shy of meddling with. Some people think that truth and gold are always to be washed for; but the wiser sort are of opinion, that, unless there are so many grains to the peck of sand or nonsense respectively, it does not pay to wash for either, so long as one can find anything else to do. I don't doubt there is some

truth in the phenomena of animal magnetism, for instance; but when you ask me to cradle for it, I tell you that the hysteric girls cheat so, and the professionals are such a set of pickpockets, that I can do something better than hunt for the grains of truth among their tricks and lies. Do you remember what I used to say in my lectures? — or were you asleep just then, or cutting your initials on the rail? (You see I can ask questions, my young friend.) *Leverage* is everything, — was what I used to say; — don't begin to pry till you have got the long arm on your side.

To please you, and satisfy your doubts as far as possible, I have looked into the old books, — into Schenckius and Turner and Kenelm Digby and the rest, where I have found plenty of curious stories which you must take for what they are worth.

Your first question I can answer in the affirmative upon pretty good authority. Mizaldus tells, in his "Memorabilia," the well-known story of the girl fed on poisons, who was sent by the king of the Indies to Alexander the Great. "When Aristotle saw her eyes *sparkling and snapping like those of serpents*, he said, 'Look out for yourself, Alexander! this is a dangerous companion for you!'" — and sure enough, the young lady proved to be a very unsafe person to her friends. Cardanus gets a story from Avicenna, of a certain man bit by a serpent, who recovered of his bite, the

snake dying therefrom. This man afterwards had a daughter whom venomous serpents could not harm, though *she had a fatal power over them.*

I suppose you may remember the statements of old authors about *lycanthropy*, the disease in which men took on the nature and aspect of wolves. Aëtius and Paulus, both men of authority, describe it. Altomaris gives a horrid case; and Fincelius mentions one occurring as late as 1541, the subject of which was captured, still *insisting that he was a wolf*, only that the hair of his hide was turned in! *Versipelles*, it may be remembered, was the Latin name for these "were-wolves."

As for the cases where rabid persons have barked and bit like dogs, there are plenty of such on record.

More singular, or at least more rare, is the account given by Andreas Baccius, of a man who was struck in the hand by a cock, with his beak, and who died on the third day thereafter, looking for all the world *like a fighting-cock*, to the great horror of the spectators.

As to impressions transmitted *at a very early period of existence*, every one knows the story of King James's fear of a naked sword, and the way it is accounted for. Sir Kenelm Digby says, — "I remember when he dubbed me Knight, in the ceremony of putting the point of a naked sword upon my shoulder, he could not endure to look upon it, but turned his face another way, inso-much, that, in lieu of touching my shoulder, he

had almost thrust the point into my eyes, had not the Duke of Buckingham guided his hand aright." It is he, too, who tells the story of the *mulberry mark* upon the neck of a certain lady of high condition, which "every year, in mulberry season, did swell, grow big, and itch." And Gafarel mentions the case of a girl born with the figure of a *fish* on one of her limbs, of which the wonder was, that, when the girl did eat fish, this mark put her to sensible pain. But there is no end to cases of this kind, and I could give some of recent date, if necessary, lending a certain plausibility at least to the doctrine of transmitted impressions.

I never saw a distinct case of *evil eye*, though I have seen eyes so bad that they might produce strange effects on very sensitive natures. But the belief in it under various names, fascination, *jet-tatura*, etc., is so permanent and universal, from Egypt to Italy, and from the days of Solomon to those of Ferdinand of Naples, that there must be some *peculiarity*, to say the least, on which the opinion is based. There is very strong evidence that some such power is exercised by certain of the lower animals. Thus, it is stated on good authority that "almost every animal becomes panic-struck at the sight of the *rattlesnake*, and seems at once deprived of the power of motion, or the exercise of its usual instinct of self-preservation." Other serpents seem to share this power of fascination, as the *Cobra* and the *Bu-*

cephalus Capensis. Some think that it is nothing but fright; others attribute it to the

“strange powers that lie
Within the magic circle of the eye,”—

as Churchill said, speaking of Garrick.

You ask me about those mysterious and frightful intimacies between children and serpents, of which so many instances have been recorded. I am sure I cannot tell what to make of them. I have seen several such accounts in recent papers, but here is one published in the seventeenth century, which is as striking as any of the more modern ones :—

“Mr. *Herbert Jones* of *Monmouth*, when he was a little Boy, was used to eat his Milk in a Garden in the Morning, and was no sooner there, but a large Snake always came, and eat out of the Dish with him, and did so for a considerable time, till one Morning, he striking the Snake on the Head, it hissed at him. Upon which he told his Mother that the Baby (for so he call’d it) cry’d *Hiss* at him. His Mother had it kill’d, which occasioned him a great *Fit of Sickness*, and ’twas thought would have dy’d, but did recover.”

There was likewise one “*William Writtle*, condemned at *Maidston Assizes* for a double murder, told a Minister that was with him after he was condemned, that his mother told him, that when he was a Child, there crept always to him a Snake, wherever she laid him. Sometimes she

would convey him up Stairs, and leave him never so little, she should be sure to find a Snake in the Cradle with him, but never perceived it did him any harm."

One of the most striking alleged facts connected with the mysterious relation existing between the serpent and the human species is the influence which the poison of the *Crotalus*, taken internally, seemed to produce over the *moral faculties*, in the experiments instituted by Dr. Hering at Surinam. There is something frightful in the disposition of certain ophidians, as the whip-snake, which darts at the eyes of cattle without any apparent provocation or other motive. It is natural enough that the evil principle should have been represented in the form of a serpent, but it is strange to think of introducing it into a human being like cow-pox by vaccination.

You know all about the *Psylli*, or ancient serpent-tamers, I suppose. Savary gives an account of the modern serpent-tamers in his "Letters on Egypt." These modern jugglers are in the habit of making the venomous *Naja* counterfeit death, lying out straight and stiff, *changing it into a rod*, as the ancient magicians did with their serpents, (probably the same animal,) in the time of Moses.

I am afraid I cannot throw much light on "Christabel" or "Lamia" by any criticism I can offer. Geraldine, in the former, seems to be simply a malignant witch-woman, with the *evil eye*,

but with no absolute ophidian relationship. Lammia is a serpent transformed by magic into a woman. The idea of both is mythological, and not in any sense physiological. Some women unquestionably suggest the image of serpents; men rarely or never. I have been struck, like many others, with the ophidian head and eye of the famous Rachel.

Your question about inherited predispositions, as limiting the sphere of the will, and, consequently, of moral accountability, opens a very wide range of speculation. I can give you only a brief abstract of my own opinions on this delicate and difficult subject. Crime and sin, being the *preserves* of two great organized interests, have been guarded against all reforming poachers with as great jealousy as the Royal Forests. It is so easy to hang a troublesome fellow! It is so much simpler to consign a soul to perdition, or say masses, for money, to save it, than to take the blame on ourselves for letting it grow up in neglect and run to ruin for want of humanizing influences! They hung poor, crazy Bellingham for shooting Mr. Perceval. The ordinary of Newgate preached to women who were to swing at Tyburn for a petty theft as if they were worse than other people, — just as though he would not have been a pickpocket or shoplifter, himself, if he had been born in a den of thieves and bred up to steal or starve! The English law never began to get hold of the idea that a crime was not neces-

sarily a sin, till Hadfield, who thought he was the Saviour of mankind, was tried for shooting at George the Third;—lucky for him that he did not hit his Majesty!

It is very singular that we recognize all the bodily defects that unfit a man for military service, and all the intellectual ones that limit his range of thought, but always talk at him as if all his moral powers were perfect. I suppose we must punish evil-doers as we extirpate vermin; but I don't know that we have any more right to judge them than we have to judge rats and mice, which are just as good as cats and weasels, though we think it necessary to treat them as criminals.

The limitations of human responsibility have never been properly studied, unless it be by the phrenologists. You know from my lectures that I consider phrenology, as taught, a pseudo-science, and not a branch of positive knowledge; but, for all that, we owe it an immense debt. It has melted the world's conscience in its crucible, and cast it in a new mould, with features less like those of Moloch and more like those of humanity. If it has failed to demonstrate its system of special correspondences, it has proved that there are fixed relations between organization and mind and character. It has brought out that great doctrine of moral insanity, which has done more to make men charitable and soften legal and theological barbarism than any one doctrine that I can think of since the message of peace and good-will to men.

Automatic action in the moral world ; the *reflex movement* which *seems* to be self-determination, and has been hanged and howled at as such (metaphorically) for nobody knows how many centuries : until somebody shall study this as Marshall Hall has studied reflex nervous action in the bodily system, I would not give much for men's judgments of each other characters. Shut up the robber and the defaulter, we must. But what if your oldest boy had been stolen from his cradle and bred in a North-Street cellar ? What if you are drinking a little too much wine and smoking a little too much tobacco, and your son takes after you, and so your poor grandson's brain being a little injured in physical texture, he loses the fine moral sense on which you pride yourself, and doesn't see the difference between signing another man's name to a draft and his own ?

I suppose the study of automatic action in the moral world (you see what I mean through the apparent contradiction of terms) may be a dangerous one in the view of many people. It is liable to abuse, no doubt. People are always glad to get hold of anything which limits their responsibility. But remember that our moral estimates come down to us from ancestors who hanged children for stealing forty shillings' worth, and sent their souls to perdition for the sin of being born, — who punished the unfortunate families of suicides, and in their eagerness for justice executed one innocent person every three years, on the average, as Sir James Mackintosh tells us.

I do not know in what shape the practical question may present itself to you; but I will tell you my rule in life, and I think you will find it a good one. *Treat bad men exactly as if they were insane.* They are *in-sane*, out of health, morally. Reason, which is food to sound minds, is not tolerated, still less assimilated, unless administered with the greatest caution; perhaps, not at all. Avoid collision with them, so far as you honorably can; keep your temper, if you can,—for one angry man is as good as another; restrain them from violence, promptly, completely, and with the least possible injury, just as in the case of maniacs,—and when you have got rid of them, or got them tied hand and foot so that they can do no mischief, sit down and contemplate them charitably, remembering that nine tenths of their perversity comes from outside influences, drunken ancestors, abuse in childhood, bad company, from which you have happily been preserved, and for some of which you, as a member of society, may be fractionally responsible. I think also that there are *special influences which work in the blood like ferments*, and I have a suspicion that some of those curious old stories I cited may have more recent parallels. Have you ever met with any cases which admitted of a solution like that which I have mentioned?

Yours very truly,

Bernard Langdon to Philip Staples.

MY DEAR PHILIP, —

I HAVE been for some months established in this place, turning the main crank of the machinery for the manufactory of accomplishments superintended by, or rather worked to the profit of, a certain Mr. Silas Peckham. He is a poor wretch, with a little thin fishy blood in his body, lean and flat, long-armed and large-handed, thick-jointed and thin-muscled, — you know those unwholesome, weak-eyed, half-fed creatures, that look not fit to be round among live folks, and yet not quite dead enough to bury. If you ever hear of my being in court to answer to a charge of assault and battery, you may guess that I have been giving him a thrashing to settle off old scores; for he is a tyrant, and has come pretty near killing his principal lady-assistant with overworking her and keeping her out of all decent privileges.

Helen Darley is this lady's name, — twenty-two or -three years old, I should think, — a very sweet, pale woman, — daughter of the usual country-clergyman, — thrown on her own resources from an early age, and the rest: a common story, but an uncommon person, — very. All conscience and sensibility, I should say, — a cruel worker, — no kind of regard for herself, — seems as fragile and supple as a young willow-shoot, but try her and

you find she has the spring in her of a steel cross-bow. I am glad I happened to come to this place, if it were only for her sake. I have saved that girl's life; I am as sure of it as if I had pulled her out of the fire or water.

Of course I'm in love with her, you say, — we always love those whom we have benefited: "saved her life, — her love was the reward of his devotion," etc., etc., as in a regular set novel. In love, Philip? Well, about that, — I love Helen Darley — very much: there is hardly anybody I love so well. What a noble creature she is! One of those that just go right on, do their own work and everybody else's, killing themselves inch by inch without ever thinking about it, — singing and dancing at their toil when they begin, worn and saddened after a while, but pressing steadily on, tottering by-and-by, and catching at the rail by the way-side to help them lift one foot before the other, and at last falling, face down, arms stretched forward —

Philip, my boy, do you know I am the sort of man that locks his door sometimes and cries his heart out of his eyes, — that can sob like a woman and not be ashamed of it? I come of fighting-blood on one side, you know; I think I could be savage on occasion. But I am tender, — more and more tender as I come into my fullness of manhood. I don't like to strike a man, (laugh, if you like, — I know I hit hard when I do strike,) — but what I can't stand is the sight

of these poor, patient, toiling women, who never find out in this life how good they are, and never know what it is to be told they are angels while they still wear the pleasing incumbrances of humanity. I don't know what to make of these cases. To think that a woman is never to be a woman again, whatever she may come to as an unsexed angel,—and that she should die unloved! Why does not somebody come and carry off this noble woman, waiting here all ready to make a man happy? Philip, do you know the pathos there is in the eyes of unsought women, oppressed with the burden of an inner life unshared? I can see into them now as I could not in those earlier days. I sometimes think their pupils dilate on purpose to let my consciousness glide through them; indeed, I dread them, I come so close to the nerve of the soul itself in these momentary intimacies. You used to tell me I was a Turk,—that my heart was full of pigeon-holes, with accommodations inside for a whole flock of doves. I don't know but I am still as Youngish as ever in my ways, —Brigham-Youngish, I mean; at any rate, I always want to give a little love to all the poor things that cannot have a whole man to themselves. If they would only be contented with a little!

Here now are two girls in this school where I am teaching. One of them, Rosa M., is not more than sixteen years old, I think they say; but Nature has forced her into a tropical luxuri-

ance of beauty, as if it were July with her, instead of May. I suppose it is all natural enough that this girl should like a young man's attention, even if he were a grave school-master; but the eloquence of this young thing's look is unmistakable, — and yet she does not know the language it is talking, — they none of them do; and there is where a good many poor creatures of our good-for-nothing sex are mistaken. There is no danger of my being rash, but I think this girl will cost somebody his life yet. She is one of those women men make a quarrel about and fight to the death for, — the old feral instinct, you know.

Pray, don't think I am lost in conceit, but there is another girl here who I begin to think looks with a certain kindness on me. Her name is Elsie V., and she is the only daughter and heiress of an old family in this place. She is a portentous and almost fearful creature. If I should tell you all I know and half of what I fancy about her, you would tell me to get my life insured at once. Yet she is the most painfully interesting being, — so handsome! so lonely! — for she has no friends among the girls, and sits apart from them, — with black hair like the flow of a mountain-brook after a thaw, with a low-browed, scowling beauty of face, and such eyes as were never seen before, I really believe, in any human creature.

Philip, I don't know what to say about this

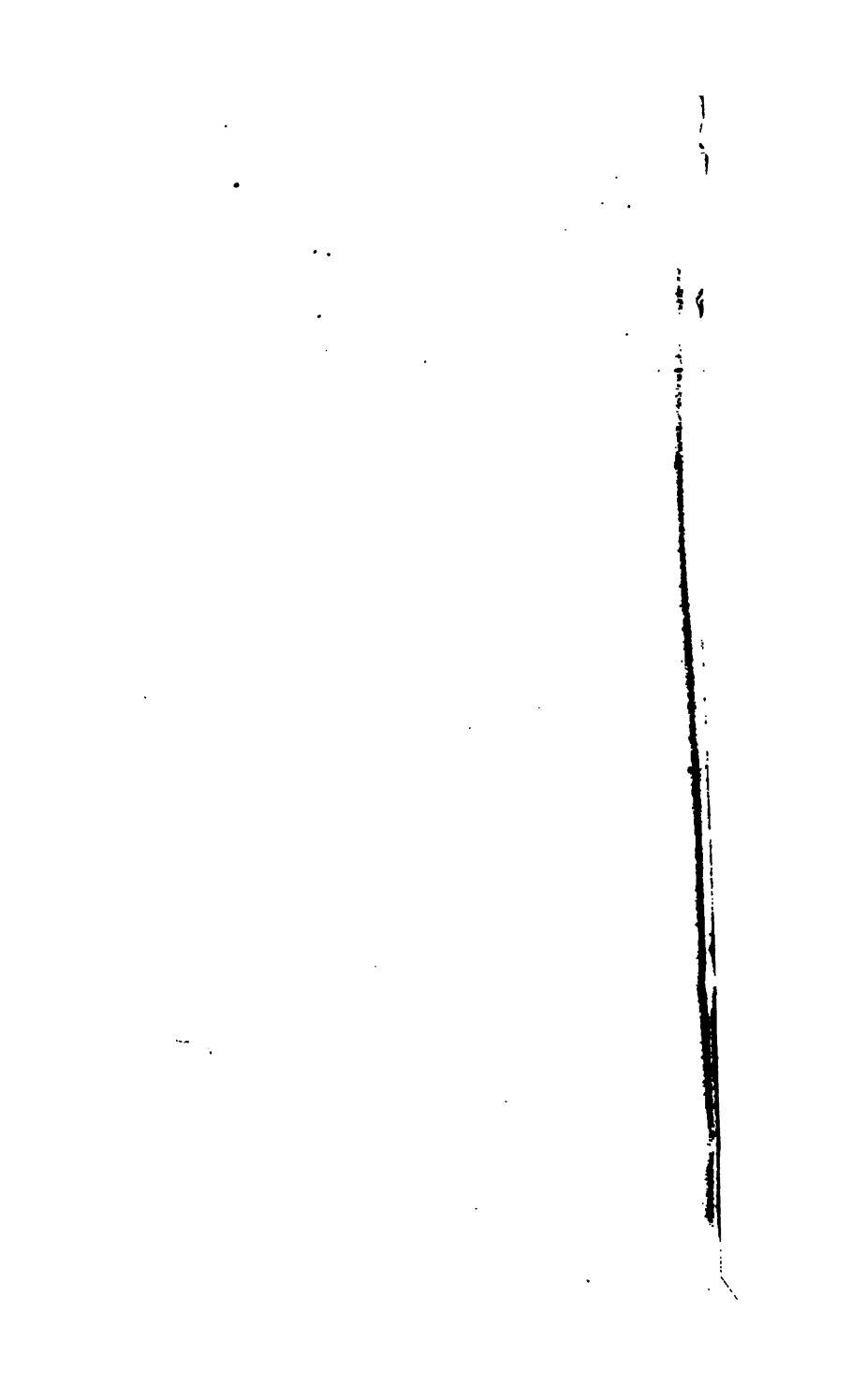
Elsie. There is something about her I have not fathomed. I have conjectures which I could not utter to any living soul. I dare not even hint the possibilities which have suggested themselves to me. This I will say, — that I do take the most intense interest in this young person, an interest much more like pity than love in its common sense. If what I guess at is true, of all the tragedies of existence I ever knew this is the saddest, and yet so full of meaning! Do not ask me any questions, — I have said more than I meant to already; but I am involved in strange doubts and perplexities, — in dangers too, very possibly, — and it is a relief just to speak ever so guardedly of them to an early and faithful friend.

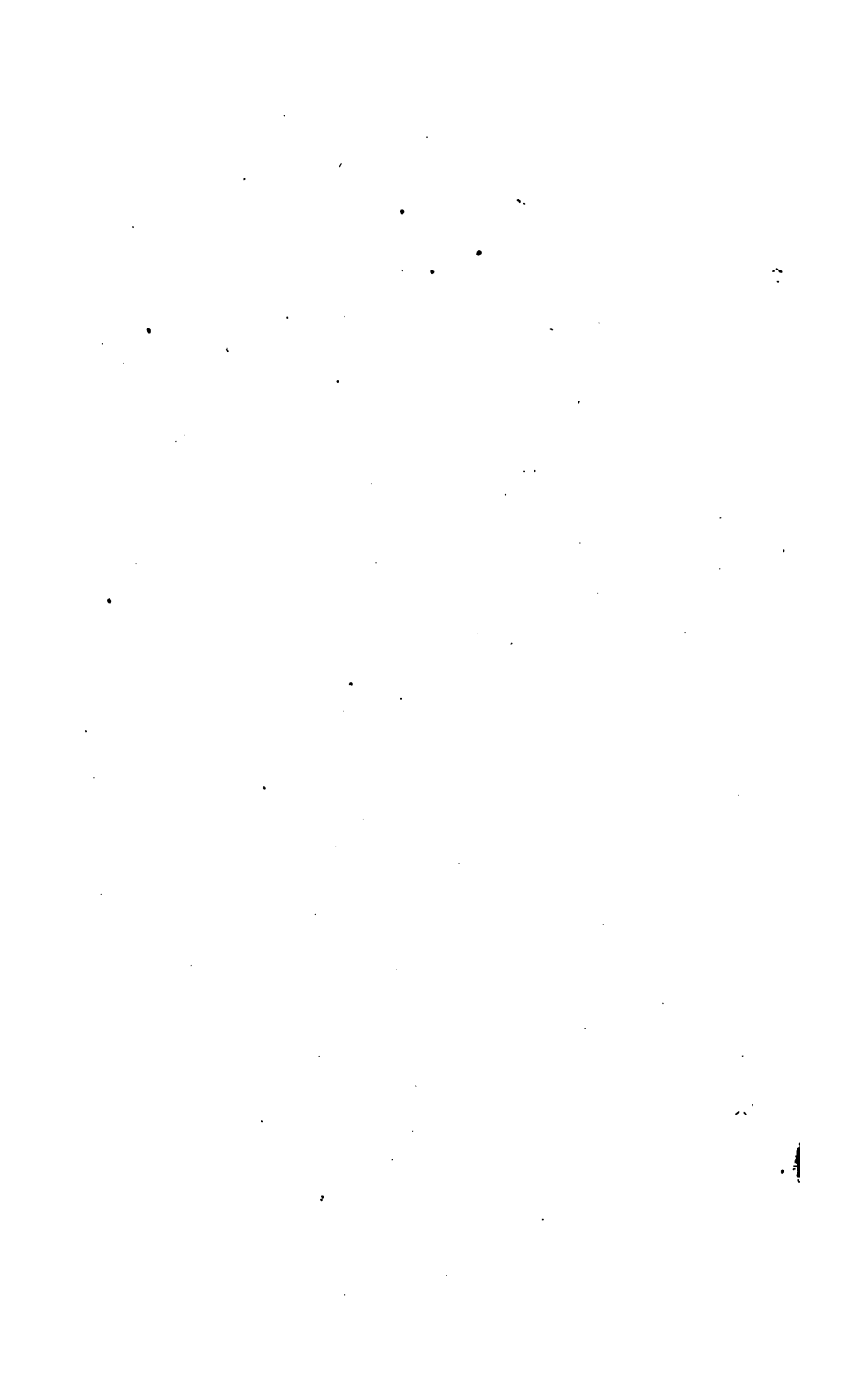
Yours ever,

BERNARD.

P. S. I remember you had a copy of Fortunius Licetus "De Monstris" among your old books. Can't you lend it to me for a while? I am curious, and it will amuse me.







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